# thinking through faith

## NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS

ARISTOTLE PAPANIKOLAOU & ELIZABETH H. PRODROMOU, EDITORS

Within these pages a younger generation of Orthodox scholars in America takes up the perennial task of transmitting the meaning of Christianity to a particular time and culture. This collection of twelve essays, as the title Thinking Through Faith implies, is the result of six years of reflective conversation and collaboration regarding core beliefs of the Orthodox faith, tenets that the authors present from fresh perspectives that appeal to reason and spiritual sensibilities alike.

## PRAISE FOR thinking through faith

"...Orthodox and other Christians will find in these pages many new insights and perspectives to meditate upon, to treasure, and to pass on."

—Albert J. Raboteau, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
from the FOREWORD

"This is an impressive and exciting book, adventurous in spirit, that has opened my mind to many new possibilities. It is particularly encouraging that the contributors belong to the younger generation of Orthodox scholars: they are proof that the future of Orthodox thinking in the West is in good hands. We Orthodox like to speak of ourselves as the Church of Holy Tradition: this book shows exactly how Tradition can and should be both living and creative."

—Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia

"A mesmerizing tour of the unique riches and vast resources of theology, liturgy, ethics, and church life that the Orthodox Christian tradition has offered the world."

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"Thinking Through Faith brilliantly provides a forum for eminent Orthodox Christians to reflect on how theology is being practiced, and how a traditional religious community is being renewed and transformed, in response to religious freedom, democracy and the U.S. marketplace of religious and secular ideas."

— R. Scott Appleby, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
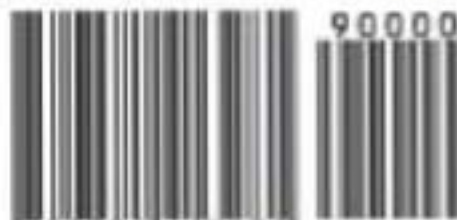
# Thinking Through Faith

## NEW PERSPECTIVES FROM ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS

*Edited by*

Aristotle Papanikolaou

Elizabeth H. Prodromou

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Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Theodora Wilbour Fund in memory of Zoë Wilbour, 54.568
Photograph by Maria Daniels, © 2008 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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# FOREWORD

This collection of twelve essays, representing new work by Orthodox scholars, is the result of six years of conversation and collaboration. As the title, *Thinking Through Faith*, implies, these are self-reflexive essays written by scholars who are engaged in critical reflection upon the meaning of their faith as participants in a living Orthodox tradition. They seek to translate that tradition anew for both Orthodox and non-Orthodox in the context of the contemporary world. Within these pages a younger generation of American Orthodox scholars takes up the perennial task of transmitting the meaning of Christianity to a particular time and culture. The task is perennial, of course, because Christianity is essentially an incarnational religion, centered upon the belief that the only begotten Son of God the Father became man at a particular time, in a particular place, among a particular people, and that this very Jesus of Nazareth commanded his followers to communicate his message (indeed his sacramental presence) to all times, places, and peoples. The task is also perennial because of the tendency of groups to conflate religion with their own particular culture, nationality, and ethnicity, thus reducing religion to a marker of national identity, an inherited set of beliefs and practices, in effect, a cultural religion lacking the wherewithal to be self-critical.

The American context may seem a singularly inhospitable one for traditional Orthodoxy, given this nation's predilection for voluntarism, pluralism, and relativism. But American pluralism does

offer a corrective medicine to the habitual inclination of religious communities, especially those formed by the experience of immigration, to identify religion with culture. Despite the long-lasting cultural hegemony of evangelical Protestantism, religious freedom gave leeway to various immigrant religious groups to establish public worship and public institutions, making freedom of conscience politically viable in this nation in opposition to the age-old predilection of governments to absorb established religions into systems of state ideology.

While the freedom of exercise clause of the First Amendment offered religious groups the freedom to practice without state proscription, the non-establishment clause guaranteed that each had to do so in the midst of conflicting religious claims. If American democracy offers religion an opportunity, American pluralism offers it a challenge. Pluralism challenges us to experience religion as more than a cultural identity. Pluralism means encountering the beliefs of others with respect for those who hold them. It challenges us to appropriate, internalize, and live out the religious identity passed on to us by family and society. It creates an opportunity to discuss and to argue for one's own beliefs and values. As the editors of this book point out, religious pluralism in contemporary America erodes cultural religion because the competitive agora makes "religious identity a conscious choice, so that commitment to Orthodoxy involves ... a daily, continuous conversion to the faith, in the face of myriad alternatives in both religious and secular terms."

The publication of this volume represents a significant historical moment in the coming of age of Orthodoxy in America, a moment when Orthodoxy is entering the pluralistic *intellectual* agora with a new self-consciousness and self-critical confidence, emerging publicly, as it were, from behind immigrant "walls."

There are many signs of this emergence in academic culture: the appointment of Orthodox scholars of religion at major non-Orthodox centers of higher learning, secular colleges and universities as well as divinity schools; the establishment of an Orthodoxy in America lecture series and an undergraduate minor in Orthodox Christian Studies at Fordham University; the increase in the publication of books on Orthodoxy by non-Orthodox publishing houses; the appearance of articles on Orthodoxy in mass circulation journals, to name only a few. The self-critical scholarly examination of one's own tradition as a sign of intellectual "arrival" has precedents of course. One thinks of the intellectual emergence of Roman Catholicism in the American agora in the 1950s and 1960s with the works of the Jesuits John Courtney Murray and George Weigel, the Cistercian monk Thomas Merton, and others, before and after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). The more recent arrival of Evangelical scholarly self-definition, called for and exemplified by religious historians George Marsden, Mark Noll, and others, also comes to mind. (It would be a valuable topic for some future scholar to describe in detail the arrival process for Orthodoxy in America.)

Current interest in Orthodoxy should generate a wide audience for these essays, especially among those interested in religion as practice. The intellectual tenor of these essays is strikingly synchronous with recent movements in the academic study of religion. The authors' emphasis upon religious experience and practice fits closely with current discussions of "lived religion," a category meant to serve as a corrective to the exclusive study of religion as an institution, a set of doctrines, or a social structure. From this perspective, the study of religious practice becomes paramount. The essays in *Thinking Through Faith* exemplify the "lived religion" approach as applied to experiential dimensions of the Orthodox tradition, such as prayer, Liturgy, Confession, proselytism, pastoral

care, and the meaning of theology itself. Moreover, the multi-disciplinary character of this endeavor—involving theology, scriptural interpretation, sociology, and history—is quite consonant with current scholarly enthusiasm for inter-disciplinary collaboration as a valuable approach for understanding complex phenomena.

Finally, Orthodox and other Christians will find in these pages many new insights and perspectives to meditate upon, to treasure, and to pass on. "New" not in the sense of "novel" or "fashionable," but in the sense of the gospel assurance that extends always and everywhere, "Behold I make all things new."

*Albert J. Raboteau,*
*Princeton University*

# INTRODUCTION

Six years ago, the contributors to this volume first met to discuss a single question: What does it mean to be an Orthodox Christian committed to scholarly excellence in the academic world and to uncompromising service in the Church? Working from the shared conviction that our life's work in the academy is both informed and enriched by our faith, we expressed a hope that our scholarship might enliven our own faith commitment and public witness, as well as that of our fellow Orthodox Christians. In a spirit of self-criticism, we came together every six months in what evolved into an intellectually exciting inquiry that continues through the time of this publication. Above all, our conversation was inspired by our desire to develop a nuanced understanding of, and especially, a spiritually mature response to, the pressing challenges of our condition as Orthodox Christians in twenty-first-century America. In this respect, we offer this volume as a humble exhortation to all Orthodox Christians to engage in the kind of reflection, critique, and action that constitutes a life in faith.

The essays cohere in the purpose expressed in the volume's title, *Thinking Through Faith*. The notion of "thinking through faith" reflects our view that intellectual creativity, originality, and robustness are not the product of a scholastic approach. Instead, our conception of intellectual growth and scholarly excellence—the disciplined mastery of specialized subject material, systematic and careful analysis, clarity and precision of expression, and above all,

fearless self-criticism—is inspired by the ascetic mindset (Greek = *fronima*), which is the bedrock of the Orthodox way of life.

In this sense, our efforts to "think, through faith" by utilizing the textual (e.g. Scripture, patristics, doctrine) and experiential (e.g. liturgy, monasticism) resources of Orthodox Christianity, and to "think-through faith" by reconsidering such practical and doctrinal identifiers of Orthodox Christianity, were driven by two key themes. First, the essays have an unmistakably self-referential quality, since our new, critical approaches to Orthodox theology are consciously shaped by our personal identities as Orthodox Christians in the United States. Second, aware that America's respect for religious diversity and the right of religious freedom have been important factors motivating successive waves of Orthodox immigration to the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, we analyzed the implications of religious pluralism for Orthodox churches in the United States today.

The market dynamics of American religious pluralism effectively make religious identity a conscious choice, so that commitment to Orthodoxy involves a daily, continuous conversion to the faith, in the face of myriad alternatives in both religious and secular terms. The voluntary nature of religion in America, therefore, prompted us to consider how Orthodox churches are defining themselves and their public theology in the face of religious-secular pluralism. Our essays inquire into the resources—textual, doctrinal, liturgical, and organizational, among others—by which Orthodox churches respond to these intensely competitive, marketplace realities. Above all, they assist Orthodox communicants in confronting the pressing existential and practical realities of postmodern life.

To illuminate how and why Orthodox churches as eucharistic communities can possibly transform the world, especially as related

to the American context, we inevitably drew on our respective academic areas of training and expertise. Indeed, the broad disciplinary scope of the essays (theology, ethics and philosophy, political science and public policy, psychology) conveys a message about methodology that emerged from our sharing and review of each other's work. In short, the contributions suggest the intellectual and practical benefits of a significant rethinking of the methods of study in America of Orthodox Christianity: an inter-disciplinary move beyond the narrow boundaries of theology conventionally understood, a concomitant expansion of inquiry outside the confines of the theological seminary, and a rejection of the study of theology by and for theologians.

We emphasize that our essays are intended to appeal to multiple readerships: the intellectually curious, spiritually adventurous, and publicly conscious Orthodox Christian in America. While the volume may, on first glance, appear to be oriented to a lay readership, in fact, we hope that the essays will be compelling for clergy and hierarchy as they ruminate on their particular station as ordained leaders of Orthodoxy in America. The work also offers Orthodox perspectives on a host of issues at the center of contemporary research agendas in theology, the humanities, and the social and natural sciences, both in academic and in public policy contexts.

Moreover, the volume testifies to the unity-in-diversity that constitutes Orthodox Christianity in the United States. The religious and social pluralism that defines contemporary America is replicated in the pluralism particular to the Orthodox experience over more than a century: demographic and cultural pluralism along immigrant-indigenous and cradle-convert lines; ethno-linguistic pluralism expressed primarily in terms of the jurisdictional division; and generational differences derived from the chronological expanse of Orthodoxy in America. The essays may be fruitfully read,

then, by considering how internal pluralism is shaping the self-perception, internal dialogue and praxis, and public witness of Orthodox Christians in America. Indeed, the volume suggests what is distinctive about Orthodox scholarship and the Orthodox experience in America, both in terms of academic research regarding other religions and also vis-à-vis Orthodoxy outside the United States.

We thank Dr Nicholas Constas (now Monk Maximus of Simonopetra Monastery on Mount Athos) for arranging space at the Divinity School of Harvard University for our initial colloquy. We also thank Dr Peter L. Berger for opening the doors of Boston University's Institute on Religion and World Affairs (now the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs) to several of our meetings. Also, Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion offered generous grant support to allow one of the co-editors the invaluable opportunity for a reduced teaching obligation at Boston University during spring 2007, towards time well-spent in writing and editing the volume in hand.

The publication of this volume would have been impossible without the generosity and patience of Dr Thomas C. Lelon, former president of Hellenic College-Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and his son, Charles T. Lelon, founder and managing partner of Kamylon Capital, LLC. Through Zacchaeus Ventures, both Lelons have been unwavering in their leadership and funding of our ongoing conversation as a group of Orthodox Christian scholars. As an active lay leader in the Greek Orthodox Church in America, Dr Lelon envisioned a forum where new Orthodox Christian voices would convene to explore the interaction of their faith and profession with the various challenges presented by being an Orthodox Christian in the United States. Dr Lelon's personal faith-commitment and steadfast support provided the opportunity for the

contributors to this volume to enjoy that inspirational combination of intellectual and spiritual community that is, lamentably, a rarity in contemporary American academia. As a lay person whose career in business is consciously informed by his commitment to Orthodox Christianity, Charles has encouraged the contributors to this volume to open a conversation between scholars and other lay professionals, towards the goal of encouraging an active understanding of lay vocations as part of the Orthodox Christian way of life. We are grateful to both members of the Lelon family for their extraordinary practice of stewardship and hospitality.

Indeed, this volume has been enabled by an abundance of goodwill, and we express our sincere thanks to all those whose efforts have allowed us to share our labors at thinking through faith.

*Elizabeth H. Prodromou,*
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*Aristotle Papanikolaou,*
*Fordham University*

# "THE KINGDOM OF GOD": PAUL THE APOSTLE'S PERILOUS PROCLAMATION

John Fotopoulos

"The kingdom of God" is a phrase that is frequently heard in the Orthodox Church in its worship, sacraments, prayers, and biblical readings. When we hear this phrase, and several variations of it, it is quite common for us to make numerous spiritual and theological associations. What do you think of when you hear the phrases, "the kingdom of God," or "Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," or "Thy kingdom come," or "Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory"? It would be common for Orthodox Christians to have thoughts of life in heaven, priests praying at the holy altar, making the sign of the cross, or family devotions in front of sacred icons. However, these thoughts were not the ones that a pagan[1] or a Jew that lived during the time of St Paul the apostle would have had when they heard the phrase "the kingdom of God." Rather, a pagan

[1]The term "pagan" is used by New Testament scholars to identify people devoted to numerous gods and goddesses in Greco-Roman antiquity. As the term is used by scholars, it does not convey any negative judgments about morals, lifestyle, or belief, but simply refers to people who were polytheists that constituted around 90% of the Roman Empire in the early first century AD.

or Jew in the first century AD would think of the kingdom of God as something powerful, violent, and political.

I am a college professor who concentrates on the New Testament, the Greco-Roman world, and early Judaism, so I live in the first century AD (my wife, of course, wishes that I lived in the twenty-first century a little more often!). I want to know how people in the first century heard the gospel message about Jesus, how early Christian writings were composed, and how these writings were understood. The scholarly investigation of the Scriptures that seeks to answer these questions is called the historical-critical method. Those using the historical-critical method attempt to understand all that can be known about the biblical authors' backgrounds and communities, as well as trying to understand the literary genres of their compositions and the situations, issues, and interests which caused the authors to write. The goal in using the historical-critical method to interpret Scripture is to arrive at its "literal sense," that is, what a biblical writing meant when it was first written and read. This way of reading and interpreting the Bible stands in opposition to the "literalist" approach to scriptural interpretation. The literalist approach assumes that God has dictated the Bible word for word to the scriptural writers, and that every statement in it is literally true, factual, complete, and inerrant. The literalist approach reduces the human authors of Scripture to mere writing instruments that composed only that which God moved their hands to write, while also having had any limitations that they possessed as finite, human beings removed. Conversely, the historical-critical method as used by Orthodox Christian biblical scholars holds that the authors of the Scriptures were indeed inspired by God in their writing, but this method also genuinely appreciates these authors' free will and limitations as human beings living in particular historical circumstances.

The use of the historical-critical method to ascertain the literal sense of Scripture leads biblical scholars to ask questions about the particular historical circumstances in the proclamation of the kingdom of God by Paul the apostle. What did ancient Greeks and Romans think of when they heard the phrase "kingdom of God" in Paul the Apostle's letters, and when they met Paul as he tried to convert them to the Lord Jesus Christ in various Greco-Roman cities? How would they have understood the phrase "kingdom of God"? In other words, to understand Paul's perilous proclamation of the kingdom, it is first necessary to know a little bit about the historical contexts within which Paul lived and worked, and what the words "kingdom of God" meant to people at that time.

Close investigation of first-century AD history reveals that Paul was not the first person to be spreading a message about a kingdom. Before Paul began his proclamation, there was the kingdom of Rome, better known as the Roman Empire, which was the ruling political authority of Paul's day. In Palestine there was also the rich heritage of the kingdom of Israel. Although the kingdom of Israel was under the domination of Roman rule in the first century AD, there was widespread hope among Jews that the kingdom of Israel would reign once more, just as it had after the victorious Maccabbean rebellion. Both the kingdom of Rome and the kingdom of Israel were part of Paul's political, cultural and religious sensibilities as a first-century Hellenized Jew living in the Roman Empire. Therefore, this paper will briefly survey first-century AD Roman and Jewish conceptions of "kingdom" in order to better understand what Paul was proclaiming about the kingdom of God, why he was proclaiming it, and why his proclamation was so perilous.[2] The

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[2]It should be noted here that I am not the first to consider Paul's proclamation of the kingdom of God in light of Roman and Jewish political history. Rather, taking into account the social-historical context of Paul's proclamation

most difficult part of such an examination for many contemporary Orthodox Christians is understanding that the concept of "kingdom" is not only fully religious, but also fully political—even politically perilous, dangerous, and threatening.

## THE KINGDOM OF ROME

The Roman Empire in its conquests had absorbed much of Alexander the Great's Macedonian Greek Empire, which had formerly spread Greek language, religion, and civilization throughout much of the known world. In Rome, Octavius was given the title "Augustus" in 27 BC and was recognized by the Roman Senate as the undisputed ruler of the Roman Empire until his death in AD 14. Augustus had ended the period of Roman civil war and was responsible for bringing peace, the *Pax Romana*, throughout the Roman Empire. The *Pax Romana* was a time of peace and prosperity for the empire. The development of cobble-stoned Roman roads facilitated commerce and the rapid movement of the Roman army. Anyone or anything that disturbed the *Pax Romana* was viewed as a threat to the great prosperity of the empire and was dealt with swiftly through violent police actions of the Roman army. Rome created peace through violence, while the emperor himself, Augustus, was the bringer of that peace.

The social order of the empire, however, did not depend solely on military dominance and robust commerce, but also on civil religion. Civil religion was the normative, pagan religiosity practiced in of the kingdom of God has been a fruitful area of study for many New Testament scholars. Because the content of the present paper is more or less a survey of this area of study, I am indebted to the numerous New Testament scholars whose work has helped shape my thinking.

cities throughout the Roman Empire, each city having had divine patrons—protector gods and goddesses—that were appeased with sacrifices at civic festivals in which citizens, residents, and slaves participated in order to promote civic solidarity and to secure the good will of their respective patron deity. Such festivals occurred frequently throughout the year, providing meat or other foodstuffs to the populace while also creating occasions of widespread celebration. Sacrifices were also made in the cities of the empire on behalf of the emperor in order to petition the traditional Greco-Roman deities for his well-being. Even more importantly, sacrifices were made in many of these cities not only *for* the emperor, but also *to* the emperor, who was worshipped as a god. Because of Rome's global dominance, which was initiated by Augustus, worship of the emperor as a god began to flourish throughout the empire. Throughout the empire there were temples dedicated to the deified Roma—the city of Rome personified as a goddess and commonly represented as a female statue—where people would come to worship and express their *Romanitas,* their sense of being Roman and their loyalty to the emperor. There were also statues of the deified Augustus, which commonly depicted the emperor in military attire and were housed in various pagan temples, such as temples dedicated to him, to Roma, or to his favorite god, Apollo. A coin (Image 1) issued by the Emperor Claudius (AD 41–54) depicts a statue of the divine Augustus crowned by the personified female goddess Roma in the temple of Augustus and Roma in the city of Pergamon. Temples and statues dedicated to Augustus and Roma helped to remind the empire's populace of the *Pax Romana,* while also sending the people a clear message that an environment of peace in the cities made violent Roman police actions unnecessary.

It was the emperor who was the symbol of Roman power, and all virtues bestowed on the empire, such as peace, justice, and security,

Image 1: Silver coin depicting Temple of Roma and Augustus in Pergamon. Roman, Imperial Period, about AD 41–42.

came from him. It was Augustus who established this dominant role for the emperor, and his divine power was conveyed through the various titles used for him. *Divi Filius*, meaning "Son of the Divine," or "Son of God," was his favorite title. This title appears on almost every coin that Augustus had minted, such as the coin depicted in Image 2, which reads, *AUGUSTUS DIVI F*, that is, Augustus Divi Filius. Augustus was considered Son of God because he had a god for his father, Julius Caesar. Julius was deified upon his death by Augustus, thus also giving Augustus divine status. Another prominent title for Augustus was *Dominus* in Latin, or *Kyrios* in Greek, which means "Lord." There were many gods and goddesses in the Greco-Roman world who had the title Lord, a title that indicated their sovereign power over the universe. Another title for Augustus was *Soter*, meaning "Savior," a title conveying that he had saved the empire from instability and foreign powers for peace. Augustus was also *Pontifex Maximus*, "High Priest," as he was the supreme devotee of the traditional gods while also being the figurehead of his own imperial cult dedicated to the worship of the emperor as a god. Even the title Augustus, meaning "Holy One," "Divine One," or "Revered One," conveyed his divine status.

Such is a sketch of the dominant kingdom and king in Paul's lifetime—the kingdom of Rome, the kingdom of Augustus, the kingdom of god. This divine king brought peace to the kingdom by means of military victory, and he was worshipped as a god by the people as a basic expression of loyalty to him.

## THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The Roman Empire ruled the land of Israel from the time of the Roman general Pompey's annexation of it in 63 BC. Although

Image 2: Gold coin with portrait of the Emperor Augustus, *Divi Filius*. Issued BC 15–13.

Rome vigorously promoted its king and kingdom throughout the empire, first-century AD Jews had their own independent notions about these matters. In the eyes of Jews, Roman imperial rule over the land of Israel was not the way things were supposed to be and was certainly not God's will. The God of Israel—Yahweh (translated as *Kyrios* in the Septuagint [the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures], "the One Who Is," "Lord")—had made a contract with Abraham, a covenant, that Yahweh would be worshipped exclusively as God. As a result of this exclusive devotion to Yahweh, Abraham and his descendents would receive numerous benefits for their strict monotheism. Genesis 17.3–8 records the covenant made with Abraham:

> 3 Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."

Yahweh, the Lord, had promised that Abraham would have numerous descendents (very significant since Abraham and his wife, Sarah, were childless into old age), descendents who would be kings, and that Abraham and his descendents would be given the land of Canaan (Israel) to be theirs forever.

Throughout the several thousand years of Israelite history, Israel had numerous kings, such as King Saul and King David, and the idea of the kingdom of Israel did not die when the Israelite Kingdoms were conquered by various pagan kingdoms, such as the Assyrians, Babylonians, Macedonian Greeks, and the Romans. Rather, a strong hope developed for a true Israelite king, like the anointed King David, who would be sent by God and would liberate the Jews from Roman rule. This coming anointed king was referred to as the "anointed one"—*mašíah* in Hebrew and *christós* in Greek—translated into English as "messiah," or "Christ." The messiah was to be a military king and/or prophet who would lead Israel in victory over God's enemies and restore the kingdom to Israel. Jeremiah 23.5–6 reads:

> 5 "The days are surely coming," says the LORD, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"

By the first century AD, many Jews identified the Roman Empire as Yahweh's enemy and hoped that the coming messiah would defeat this pagan kingdom and establish Israel's kingdom of God. Israel was the sacred land that Yahweh had given to Abraham in the covenant and it was to be the Israelites' forever. Consequently, the Romans had to be driven out of Israel since these pagan rulers polluted the land (while also levying heavy taxes!). During the period of Roman rule, there were numerous Jewish leaders that rose up from among the people to rid the land of pagan rule, making claims of being the messiah and promising defeat of the Gentiles and the

reign of Israel's kingdom of God. These prophet, messiah-type leaders would regularly stir up the Jewish people to riot or revolt against the Romans and they were regularly annihilated by Roman police actions. Finally, the volatile situation in Israel erupted into a full-scale conflict known as the First Jewish War against Rome (AD 66–73), which Rome also violently squashed. Another example of Israel's hope for liberation from Rome was the Second Jewish War against Rome, the so-called Bar Kochba rebellion (AD 132–135) named after the man who many Jews believed to be the messiah, Simon Bar Kochba. Bar Kochba (meaning "Son of the Star," a messianic title) and his loyal Jewish rebels managed to capture Jerusalem for a time from the Romans and proceeded to declare their newfound kingdom as the anticipated kingdom of God! Image 3 displays a coin minted by Bar Kochba in the first year of the Second Jewish War against Rome (AD 132/133), depicting a bunch of grapes with the Hebrew inscription reading, "Year One of the Redemption of Israel." This type of coin is very significant because it conveys the belief of Bar Kochba's Jewish rebels that the kingdom of God had been finally established and was in its first year! The Romans, however, responded in their usual way to such messianic claims—with swift, brutal violence that resulted in the death of Bar Kochba and most of his followers. Crucifixion was a well-known form of Roman capital punishment for dangerous, revolutionary types in the empire. In fact, most Roman cities had established locations for crucifixion just outside the city walls, with permanent vertical posts fixed into the ground (called a *simplex* in Latin) as visible deterrents to violent uprisings. Although many messianic claimants and thousands of their Jewish followers died brutal deaths by Roman crucifixion and other violent means, many pious Jews still eagerly waited for their messiah to bring an end to Roman rule and establish Israel's kingdom of God.

establish the kingdom of God. However, his vision of the risen Jesus proved to Saul the Shammaite Pharisee that he had it all wrong and that Jesus was really God's messiah. Although Jesus was crucified by the Romans as a failed messianic claimant—a basic fact demonstrating to Saul that Jesus was defeated and could not possibly be the messiah—Jesus' resurrection from the dead was proof of his cosmic victory and universal rule. Jesus' resurrection from the dead proved to Saul that the messianic age had arrived in Jesus and that Saul, with his name changed to Paul, also needed to change radically his understanding of God's messiah and the kingdom of God. The resurrection of Jesus proved that Christ Jesus was a very different kind of king and that both Jews and Gentiles were to be members of his kingdom. Paul, expressing these very ideas by using a pre-Pauline hymn, writes in Philippians 2.5–11:

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The resurrection proved that Jesus Christ is Lord—*Kyrios*—Yahweh. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures), *Kyrios* is the Greek word used to translate the Hebrew word "Yahweh" over 6000 times. If Jesus Christ is proven by the resur-

rection to be Lord/*Kyrios*/Yahweh, then every being in the universe should bow down before him. God's kingdom had been established by Jesus' death and resurrection, and Paul clearly understood by his vision of the risen Lord Jesus that it was his mission to reach out to the Gentiles for their inclusion in the kingdom of God. Paul understood that God's messiah was not to be the exclusive king of the Israelites, but he was meant to be the world's king, a light to the Gentiles, and as such his kingdom must include Gentiles from throughout the empire. This new understanding that Paul gained is expressed in a messianic prophecy from Isaiah 49.5–6, which Paul certainly knew:

> 5 And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—6 he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Through the resurrection of Jesus, Paul clearly understood who the world's king was and what the king's kingdom was to be like. Any king other than Jesus was regarded by Paul as a fake and a phony that prevented people from following the world's true king.

## PAUL'S GOSPEL: THE PERILOUS PROCLAMATION OF THE KING AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Paul's experience of the risen Jesus propelled him to be an emissary of his king, the Lord Jesus Christ. He traveled throughout the Roman

Empire proclaiming his gospel about the death and resurrection of Jesus, specifically targeting Gentiles with his message of salvation within the kingdom of God. While spreading this gospel message, Paul consciously used terms and concepts that were commonly used by Roman emperors to convey their ideology of dominant Roman imperial rule. Paul's use of the word *euaggelion* ("good news" or "gospel") to describe his message, for example, is a word used in Roman imperial propaganda. *Euaggelion*, a Greek word that predates Paul, refers to the good news of a king's victory in battle. Paul aptly used this word to describe what God had done in Jesus. Paul was also calling Jesus "Son of God," "Lord," and "Savior," the same titles used by Roman emperors to communicate their kingship and divine status. Paul's gospel asserted that peace, justice, and security are bestowed by the world's only king, the Lord Jesus Christ, thus unmistakably implying that these virtues were not truly provided by the Roman emperor.

Moreover, Paul was expecting a final battle to take place in the very near future between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Rome, a violent confrontation that would bring swift destruction to those opposed to the world's true king. This final war would occur, Paul stated, at the *parousia* (arrival/coming) of Lord Jesus from heaven (1 Thess 4.15). The Greek word *parousia* is also an imperial term that commonly refers to the arrival of a victorious king into a city after battle. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul's earliest extant letter, written about AD 51, the apostle describes what the *parousia* of Jesus will be like (1 Thess 5.1–11):

1 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. 2 For you yourselves know very well that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 When they say, "There is peace and

security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! 4 But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; 5 for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. 6 So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; 7 for those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

The future coming of the Lord was a popular Jewish concept that referred to the end of evil in the world, the Day of the Lord (*Yom Yahweh* in Hebrew), which is the day of God's wrath when God's enemies will be judged and God's faithful people will be saved. In 1 Thessalonians 5.3 Paul seems to be making a scathing critique of those whose hope is in the peace (*pax, eirene*) and security (*securitas, asphaleia*) of Roman rule. Paul believed that God's wrath would be inflicted on those who were on the side of Rome and not on the side of Christ's kingdom of God. Those loyal to the Roman emperor were to experience "sudden destruction" and "no escape," which would occur like the arrival of a "thief in the night."

Another text that illustrates the implications of Paul's proclamation of the kingdom of God is Philippians 3.17–21. Paul writes:

17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many

live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Philippi was a Roman colony populated with Roman soldiers due to the presence of a large military base. It was a place where loyalty to the Roman Empire and emperor was especially valued and lauded. Paul's message asserted that the lives of those people opposed to the cross of Christ would end in destruction, while the citizenship of Christians would be in heaven. Their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, would be arriving from heaven in victory and his enemies would be subjected to him in defeat.

The danger of Paul's message should be immediately clear: there was already a divine, savior king—the Roman emperor—and his kingdom was to be the sole locus of loyalty and citizenship for the residents of Philippi. Paul's understanding of citizenship in the kingdom of God is one that demands that the entirety of a person's life be loyal to the king, Christ Jesus, and to his kingdom. There is no place for behavior reflecting "other" kingdoms. There is no place for sin, idolatry, sexual immorality, violence, greed, arrogance, and other such things. Christian citizenship, Paul asserts, is in heaven and must be heavenly, reflecting the king of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one more Pauline text that can help to demonstrate what Paul was trying to say with his proclamation of the kingdom of God. In 1 Cor 15.20–26, Paul writes:

20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. 21 For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; 22 for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

This text demonstrates that Paul believed that a basic consequence of Christ's resurrection is the future resurrection of Christ's loyal followers. For Paul, this will occur at Christ's *parousia*, when Jesus will also destroy "every ruler and every authority and power," then handing over the kingdom to God the Father. Paul's words offer hope to those loyal to Christ and his kingdom, but for those loyal to the Roman emperor and his kingdom this is a message of doom and destruction.

## A POLITICAL GOSPEL?

Was Paul's gospel of the kingdom of God intentionally political? It certainly seems that way. It is, however, helpful to remember that politics and religion were almost inseparable in the first century AD, and this applies to pagans, Jews, and Christians. Paul's gospel was political because it was apocalyptic—meaning that Paul expected the final, public, powerful victory of God's kingdom in the world over whatever or whoever ruled his present age. As such, Paul's proclamation of the kingdom of God was a direct challenge

to Roman rule and was perceived by Roman officials as subversive, seditious, rebellious, and dangerous. It would seem to be for this reason that Paul is careful to explain in his Letter to the Romans (written AD 58), a message destined for Christians in the capital of the empire, that Jesus' loyal followers should not engage in violent resistance against Rome as had many Jewish rebels in Palestine, something which ultimately led to the First Jewish War against Rome (AD 66). Rather, Paul urged the Christians of Rome to be subject to the governing authorities since Christians are called to love all people, just as commanded by Christ. Even so, Paul's Christian converts were being spread throughout the cities of the empire, filled with apocalyptic expectation as they eagerly awaited the violent destruction of the Roman kingdom and its emperor by the Lord Jesus Christ who would be arriving from heaven very soon (cf. 1 Thess 4.13–18). However, Paul urged the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ not to be violent—God would take care of God's enemies in short time. Rather, Paul urged his Christian converts to prepare themselves for the Day of the Lord—Lord Jesus Christ's imminent arrival—by their vigilant ethical behavior until Christ descended from heaven.

Official Roman government reaction to Paul and his message was as we might expect: Paul was arrested and flogged on numerous occasions, finally being executed by capital punishment. This should be enough to demonstrate that the Roman Empire interpreted Paul's proclamation of Lord Jesus the Messiah in very much the way that it has been presented in this paper. Even the Acts of the Apostles presents Paul's proclamation in this dangerous, anti-imperial way—all the more significant since a consistent theme emphasized by the author of Acts is that Christians are not dangerous and that Romans have nothing to fear from the Christian movement. Acts 17.7 narrates a scene in Thessaloniki where Paul's adversaries

lodge charges against him with Roman officials, declaring that Paul is "acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus." This is not the kind of charge that Acts would seek to fabricate, but rather represents widespread Roman understanding of and reaction to Paul's proclamation of his king, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## APPLICATION OF PAUL'S PROCLAMATION FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS TODAY

How can Orthodox Christians benefit in their Christian lives by better understanding Paul's proclamation of the kingdom of God and the king, the Lord Jesus Christ, in its first-century historical context? Several ways come to mind.

First, Paul's proclamation declares in no uncertain terms that Christian identity is to be found primarily in the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Paul did not ask the Roman Christians that he converted to renounce their Roman citizenship, but he did remind them that their true citizenship was in heaven from where they were expecting their savior to return. Today in the contemporary American political scene, many politicians and televangelists have framed Christian faith and identity as loyalty to a particular political party. Some Americans cannot even imagine the possibility of being a Christian without loyalty and support of some political party. But what light do Paul's writings shed on these ideas? For Paul it would seem that political affiliations are permissible, but this should not be the source of one's views or identity, nor should it be the chief focus of one's loyalty. Rather, the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God are to inform an Orthodox Christian's identity, and this is to be the source of an Orthodox Christian's thought and

ideals. One or another social or political issue must not define the views and political affiliations of Orthodox Christians, but rather these views and affiliations should be shaped by the totality of the gospel message. In short, Orthodox Christians are not to pick and choose what they find appealing and what they do not in the gospel. Paul the apostle challenges Orthodox Christians to bring their beliefs, affiliations, concerns, and behavior into union with the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God, something for which no human leader, political party, social group, or nation can serve as substitute.

Second, we can all benefit by remembering that the Lord Jesus Christ is a king, but not as Saul the Shammaite Pharisee expected the messiah would be. Saul expected the messiah to be a military king that would lead the Jews to victory over the Romans in order to help establish Israel's kingdom of God. However, Jesus is a crucified king, a seemingly defeated hero. To the world, both in the first century and today, Jesus seems like a loser, not like a winner—and certainly not like a victorious king. Yet the cross of Christ shows humankind what victory and glory really are in the eyes of God. Through the cross, God has turned worldly values and expectations upside down. What seems like foolishness and defeat to the world, is really wisdom and victory to God. Although faith in Christ may seem like foolishness and a waste of time to the world, in the eyes of God such faith is wise and proper. The crucifixion of the king also tells humankind that God identifies with those who suffer and with the so-called "losers" of the world. In the crucifixion, God has sided with the poor, the weak, and the powerless. This strongly suggests that there is an imperative for Orthodox Christians to be committed to those people who are in need, who are weak, and those who suffer—the poor, the powerless, and the needy, those who in the eyes of God are the true victors.

Finally, it can be beneficial for us to remember that Paul's proclamation of the Lord Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God was not meant to be divisive, but unifying. Paul had very particular ideas about the proper identity all Christians were to have as citizens of the kingdom of God: those citizens were to work to bring all people together as part of the kingdom of God, regardless of race, social status, gender, or ethnic identity. Paul was creating a new human community, a new empire, where there was neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but everyone was one in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal 3.28). This is not to say that ethnic identity, social status, or gender are obliterated in Christ, but rather these particularities are no longer to serve as means of division or inequitable distinctions among people. Certainly, racial identity, ethnic identity, and gender are part of the God-given diversity of humankind and they are to be celebrated as such. Orthodox Christians do not need to abandon their ethnicity or race or culture for membership in the kingdom— indeed this is not even possible—rather these God-given particularities should add to the richness and diversity of those in the kingdom of God. However, Paul's gospel message challenges Orthodox Christians to move beyond their natural racial, ethnic, social, and gender comfort zones for the inclusion and utilization of all people in the kingdom of God. If communities of the kingdom—local Orthodox parish churches—are not welcoming of all people, regardless of race or ethnic identity, then the true purpose of the kingdom is being stifled. The kingdom of God that Paul proclaimed is meant to be the unified community of all those loyal to the crucified and risen king, the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul writes in Rom 1.16:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

# THE FOUNDATIONS OF NOETIC PRAYER

## Demetrios S. Katos

Perched upon craggy slopes above the sea, nestled deep within densely wooded forests, and rooted in the stone and sand of inhospitable deserts, Christian ascetics abide in solitude and silence so that they might hear the still, small voice of God.[1] They practice what is known as "noetic" prayer, experiencing God directly in a communion that transcends all words or thoughts. Recent decades have witnessed a revival of this venerable tradition of prayer. Crumbling monasteries have been restored in Europe, new ones have sprouted in the United States, and the *Philokalia*, an anthology of early Christian and Byzantine literature on noetic prayer, has been translated into several modern languages.[2] In many circles—ecclesiastical, academic, and lay—these developments have been heralded as a renaissance of genuine, Orthodox Christian spirituality.

[1] Cf. 1 Kg 19.12.

[2] For an English translation, see G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, eds., *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, 4 vols. (London: Faber and Faber, 1979). For a brief introduction, see Andrew Louth, "The Theology of the *Philokalia*," in John Behr, et al., eds., *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 351–62.

In other circles, however, the response to this revival has been lukewarm, perhaps even critical. Most Orthodox Christians in the United States were born and raised in a cultural and intellectual environment very different than the one in which the practices of noetic prayer originated. It is difficult to see how the aspirations or norms of cloistered ascetics, unburdened by the toil of domestic obligations, could be relevant for modern life. One might be skeptical of claims made by monastic authors and spiritual guides that noetic prayer has universal appeal, because its skilled practitioners are only those who have abandoned secular careers, severed social bonds, and devoted to it hours each day for many years. Some might conclude from this that noetic prayer is inimical to the conduct of Christian life within modern, secular society, and thus to be ignored or resisted.

Noetic prayer, however, has been practiced within the ascetic Christian tradition for at least 1,600 years. To dismiss it as exotic would reflect a gradual estrangement in attitudes toward the spiritual life among Christians and thus raise the specter of division with the Church. Moreover, its resurgence in recent years is a testimony to its vitality. Even if only a few practice it, many can be inspired by its call to a more intimate communion with both God and neighbor.

This essay reclaims the value of noetic prayer for a contemporary audience by exploring the intellectual background and theological context within which this practice was first discussed by an ascetic named Evagrius of Pontus (AD 345–99). Although a discourse on non-discursive prayer may seem paradoxical at best, and futile at worst, it is vital for educated Christians to understand the nature and diversity of practices within the Church. Some may object to the study of someone who is not a saint in the church, yet as Orthodox Christians we pride ourselves in the antiquity of our

traditions, and Evagrius was the first to write about noetic prayer at length. More importantly, Evagrius helped shape the practice that the Church embraces today, by establishing some foundational principles of noetic prayer. First, he taught that noetic prayer requires *apatheia*, which is not merely purification from sin and vice, but transformation into an authentic humanity characterized by love. Second, he explained why all mental images and thoughts, even those concerning God, must be utterly eradicated if one wishes to encounter God directly and without any mediation. Finally, Evagrius also suggested that noetic prayer was the ultimate spiritual sacrifice that restores communion not only with God, but also with one's neighbor.

## NOETIC PRAYER AND *APATHEIA*

Noetic prayer is a direct communion with God in a state that is beyond all mental images, words, or thoughts.[3] It is prayer in the sphere of the *nous*, often translated as "intellect" or "mind," but referring to something much greater than the mind or cognition. The *nous* is the human faculty that seeks God, and which encounters God directly and without mediation. It is the soul's most profound receptive faculty, which is capable of direct spiritual vision and contemplation (*theoria*). This prayer was first called "pure" or "true" prayer, because its goal is direct communion with God and it requires intense concentration of both body and mind.[4] Today it is

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[3]For an excellent introduction to noetic prayer, see Kallistos Ware, "Ways of Prayer and Contemplation," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, eds. (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 395–412.

[4]Noetic prayer is not prayer of supplication or glorification, that which we typically consider to be prayer and which was called "psalmody" in the ancient

more commonly called "prayer of the heart" or "quietude" (*hesy-chia*), two terms that gained currency during the medieval and early modern periods.[5]

To learn more about what noetic prayer requires and what it entails, even though it can never be truly described, we may turn to Evagrius of Pontus.[6] Evagrius was an erudite deacon who was ordained by and served under St Gregory the Theologian in Constantinople, and who earned a reputation as a staunch proponent of the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), or the First Ecumenical Council. At the age of thirty-eight he abandoned the bustle of urban life for the solitude of the Egyptian desert, where he became a disciple of both St Macarius of Egypt and St Macarius of Alexandria.[7] He died only sixteen years later, but in that short time he had gained renown as a great spiritual guide and teacher.

It was during this period that Evagrius wrote *On Prayer*, a work that teaches monks how to pray with the *nous*, or what he called "praying purely" or "truly." This treatise marks the beginning of a long tradition of hesychastic literature, and it inspired many other

Church. Moreover, even though noetic prayer has been facilitated by the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," or an abbreviated variation thereof) since at least since the seventh century, noetic prayer is a personal encounter with God that transcends any particular words or thoughts, because God cannot be limited by any words or thoughts. Although not discussed here, Evagrius had even more to say about psalmody, for which see Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[5]Ware offers a chronological development of noetic prayer in "Ways of Prayer," 402–10.

[6]For an introduction to Evagrius' life, thought, and works, see Augustine Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus*, Early Church Fathers Series (London: Routledge, 2006).

[7]Gabriel Bunge, "Évagre le Pontique et les deux Macaire" *Irénikon* 56 (1983): 215–27, 323–60.

works on the subject. In the eighteenth century, it was included in the *Philokalia* by SS Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and Macarius of Corinth and it remains a classic treatment of noetic prayer to the present day, even though the Church condemned Evagrius in the sixth century, more than 150 years after his death. His condemnation was prompted by theological developments and controversies that had rendered deficient his views on the nature of creation and the final age in God's kingdom.[8] Despite this, his influence on subsequent thinkers, such as St Maximus the Confessor (AD 580–662), was profound, and his treatises on spiritual matters remained popular throughout the medieval and early modern period, as testified by his inclusion in the *Philokalia*. In recent decades, scholarly studies on Evagrius have proliferated.[9]

Evagrius made it clear that noetic prayer can be practiced only if one is continually purifying his soul of passions and acquiring virtue. This stage of constant exercise (*praktike*) is a mark of authentic human existence and its goal is a condition he called *apatheia*. Evagrius refined many Greek and Christian philosophical traditions concerning the soul, how it is affected by the passions, and what is meant by *apatheia*, in order to teach the practice of noetic prayer to others. To each of these topics we must now turn.

Evagrius, as most of his contemporaries, owed a particular debt to the Greek philosophical tradition for its diagnosis of the human condition. According to this tradition, there are three fundamental

[8]See Martin Parmentier, "Evagrius of Pontus' *Letter to Melania*" *Bijdragen* 46 (1985): 2–38; for a detailed survey of Evagrius' problematic cosmology, soteriology, and eschatology, see the posthumously published work of Antoine Guillaumont, *Un philosophe au desert Évagre le Pontique* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), 337–404.

[9]For a survey of the recent literature, see Augustine Michael Casiday, "Gabriel Bunge and the Study of Evagrius Ponticus" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48 (2004): 249–97.

human activities: desiring, acting, and thinking. These activities, in turn, were reified as faculties of the soul: desiring as the "concupiscible" faculty, acting as the "irascible" faculty, and thinking as the "rational" faculty. Since desire and action are typically directed toward securing some physical pleasure or material good, they were often categorized as belonging to the lower, or animal, soul. The animal soul is the force found in all animate creatures and is directly involved in providing sustenance or managing daily affairs. Thought, however, is one step removed from this level of reality, because it examines and reflects upon everyday life; for this reason, the rational faculty was also called the "higher soul." The rational or higher soul was even believed capable of perceiving ultimate reality, that is, the inner structure and higher meaning of the world.

Of course, there were significant differences between late antique Greek and Christian conceptions of the soul. In general, the Platonist tradition deprecated the lower soul, because it perceived it as subject to change, disturbance, or disruption. It also glorified the higher, rational soul as unchanging, timeless, or eternal. The Christian tradition, however, was more circumspect. For example, Evagrius recognized that desiring, acting, and thinking were morally neutral activities. Desires are not inherently evil, neither is reason immune to perversion. He posited that each part of the soul could be used for good or evil, and therefore he exhorted the monk to establish virtue in every part of the soul.[10] Put simply, the concupiscible (desirous) part of our soul should not love wealth, but God; the irascible (active) part should not be inflamed against a neighbor, but against evil; the rational (reasoning) part should not be engaged in manipulation, but wisdom.

[10] Evagrius *Praktikos* 89. All translations of Evagrius in this paper are by Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: the Greek Ascetic Corpus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

When the soul's harmonious order was disrupted, it was said to suffer from passions. Passion (*pathos* in Greek) did not mean then, as it does now, either romantic love or enthusiastic commitment. In early Christian spiritual literature, passion generally referred to an illness of the soul, a misuse of the soul's power, or a disordered state of the soul.[11] The word passion literally meant "that which happens to a person."[12] It was derived from the verb "to have something done to one, to suffer" (*pascho*), similar to the medieval and early modern English usage of "to suffer," which meant to be the object of an action or to be acted upon. The term often bore a negative connotation, because being the passive subject of an action implies lack of control. Plato, for example, had used the word passion to refer to the unrestrained appetites and impulses of human nature that are disruptive and enervating, even destructive. Passion, however, could also refer simply to change. Greeks believed only the lower or animal soul was subject to change, so they called it the passionate (*patheton* or *pathetikon*) part of the soul. Reason, they believed, was unchanging and therefore eternal.

The Christian tradition gradually adapted passion to refer to the mutability of the human person, towards either good or evil, and considered the passions amoral. Unlike the Platonist tradition, Christianity viewed change as good, such as the change that believers experience when they acquire virtues, or while being mortal they participate in a deified, immortal condition. This is why later authors such as St Maximus the Confessor and St Gregory Palamas (AD 1296–1359) speak of the transposition of the passions, from

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[11]Lampe, G.W.H. ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961–68), s.v. *"pathos"* II.A.1.

[12]Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. *"pathos."*

bad to good passions.[13] Early authors, however, such as Evagrius and most of his predecessors and contemporaries, used passion in a negative sense.

Evagrius believed passions were stirred up by either an improper use of the senses or evil thoughts (*logismoi*).[14] This is why a monk "guards the senses and makes war on the thoughts."[15] Evagrius believed that it is impossible for a Christian not to be plagued by such *logismoi*, but he firmly insisted that "it is for us to decide if they are to linger within us or not and whether or not they stir up the passions."[16] Weeding passions from the soul is easiest if one removes them at the moment they germinate. He grouped the thoughts into eight categories: gluttony, fornication, avarice, sadness, anger, despondency (*acedia*), vainglory, and pride.[17] His classification is both insightful and comprehensive. First, it suggests an order in which the *logismoi* should be overcome. For example, the monastic vocation begins with vows of abstinence, chastity, and poverty, which also marked the struggle against the first three passions, namely gluttony, fornication, and avarice, at the start of the spiritual life. The last passions in the sequence, vainglory and pride, are the last to be overcome. Second, the classification coordinates each of the passions with the part of the soul that suffers from them. The first four clearly belong to the desiring, or concupiscible (appet-

[13] See Kallistos Ware, "The Way of Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative?" in *Asceticism*, Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3–15; idem, "The Meaning of 'Pathos' in Abba Isaias and Theodoret of Cyrus," in *Studia Patristica* 20 (Leuven, 1989), 315–22.

[14] Evagrius *Praktikos* 4 and 6.

[15] Evagrius *To Eulogios* 13.12.

[16] Evagrius *Praktikos* 6.

[17] Evagrius *Praktikos* 6 lists them in summary form; sayings 7–33 treat them severally. See also Evagrius' *On the Eight Thoughts*, another text included in the *Philokalia*.

itive), part of the soul. Anger and despondency correspond to the irascible, and finally, vainglory and pride afflict the rational part of the soul.[18] By discerning the thought at hand, one may determine which part of the soul is ill and then apply its appropriate remedy.

Ignoring the *logismoi* ultimately stills the passions and results in *apatheia. Apatheia* literally means "impassibility," or "freedom from *pathos.*" Although Stoics used it to mean "freedom from emotion," early Christian theologians such as Clement of Alexandria gave it positive content. Clement used *apatheia* to describe the state of the Christian believer who had attained such great spiritual knowledge that he became immovable in his love for God. Clement believed that apatheia rendered a believer impervious to all desires or impulses that might tear one away from love for God.

For Evagrius, *apatheia* was freedom from vainglorious and prideful thoughts. The thought of vainglory "is a most subtle one and readily insinuates itself within the virtuous person with the intention of publishing his struggles and hunting after the esteem that comes from people."[19] Vainglory desires reward from a neighbor and not from God (cf. Mt 6.2), and scatters the virtue that took so long to be obtained. On the other hand, pride "induces the soul to refuse to acknowledge that God is its helper and to think that it is itself the cause of its good actions."[20] A believer overcome with pride has completed his internal tower of Babel with its top in the heavens, and removed God from his vision altogether.[21] *Apatheia* is

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[18]These eight thoughts are so characteristic of human shortcomings that they eventually gave rise to the Catholic doctrine of the seven cardinal sins. It was St John Cassian, a disciple of Evagrius, who modified and disseminated this teaching to a Latin-speaking audience, and St Gregory the Great who gave it the final form it has today.

[19]Evagrius *Praktikos* 13.

[20]Evagrius *Praktikos* 14.

[21]Cf. Gen 11.4.

freedom from the greatest enemy to salvation, one's selfish ego, and it seeks to restore communion with God.

The most certain signpost of *apatheia* is your relationship with your neighbor, which is why Evagrius discusses at length the subject of anger. The slightest twinge of anger proves that pride lurks below the surface and that the highest form of communion with God is not yet possible. "Those who store up hurts and resentments in themselves and think they can pray are like people who draw water and put it into a jar full of holes."[22] More sternly he writes elsewhere, "no one with a love for true prayer who entertains anger or harbors resentment escapes madness, for that is like one who wants acuity of vision but does harm to his eyes."[23] His eyes are the mind of the soul, to which both anger and resentment are harmful. One cannot nurse an ego and still commune directly with God, because his primary interest still lies in himself and not in the Other.

*Apatheia*, therefore, is only an intermediate goal. It foreshadows something that is greater still, namely love, which is "the offspring of apatheia."[24] Evagrius inherited from Clement and the Platonic tradition an understanding of spiritual progress or growth as moving from practice (*praxis* or *praktike*) to knowledge (*gnosis*) and ending in contemplation (*theoria*). In other words, the spiritual life begins with the practice of virtue, progresses to an understanding of the nature of creation and its relationship to God, and culminates in the direct contemplation of God. It is for this reason that Evagrius describes Christianity as "comprised of the practical, the natural, and the theological."[25] *Apatheia* indicates completion of the first

[22]Evagrius *On Prayer* 22.
[23]Evagrius *On Prayer* 64.
[24]Evagrius *Praktikos* 81.
[25]Evagrius *Praktikos* 1.

stage and enables the believer to progress to the second and third stages or aspects of the spiritual life. The spiritual life, however, is dynamic, and so *apatheia* is not static but requires continuous exercise and maintenance; one's whole life will be spent in the pursuit of virtue and purification. Yet, we are not condemned as Sisyphus to a futile task of ceaseless repetition, for our exercise leads to nothing less than a vision of God.

## AN IMAGELESS VISION OF GOD

Evagrius taught that in noetic prayer the mind must be completely devoid of all images and conceptions concerning God: "When you pray do not form images of the divine within yourself."[26] God is utterly transcendent—that is, totally other and completely unlike anything created—so it would be mistaken to identify God with any mental images that limit and distort God's true nature. But his oblique admonition to "make no attempt at all to receive a figure or form or color during the time of prayer," is also inspired by his insight into human mind's cognitive functions.[27] Permitting images during noetic prayer not only indicates that one has misunderstood God's nature, but that one is still enthralled with the created order and has not stopped to listen or speak to God.

Evagrius was shaped by a philosophical culture that stressed God's transcendence. According to the Platonist tradition, to exist means to be intelligible. Everything that exists is definable, it possesses characteristics that can be understood by the mind. It is for this reason that Greek and Christian thinkers, such as Plotinus, St Gregory of Nyssa, Proclus, and St Dionysius the Areopagite, grad-

[26]Evagrius *On Prayer* 66.
[27]Evagrius *On Prayer* 114.

ually came to the startling conclusion that God cannot be the greatest or highest being. Rather God must be beyond any of these categories, beyond being and even intelligibility, because to be (or to be intelligible) means to be limited, and by definition anything limited could not be the ultimate reality. Any alternative would imply that God is part of the created order, and not wholly other or transcendent. This also coincided well with the Bible, which proclaims God as "Holy! Holy! Holy!" (Is 6.3), that is, completely set apart from creation, wholly other, and wholly transcendent. God must also be utterly simple, devoid of any characteristics that could be limiting in any way; this too coincided well with a biblical faith, which forbade any images of God who is wholly other.

Evagrius also had a very complex understanding of the human mind and the way in which it comes to know or understand reality.[28] According to Evagrius, the rational part of the soul engages in discursive or dialectical means of knowing, by engaging various thoughts (not *logismoi*, but *noemata*) of which each leave an impress on the mind (*nous*) in sequence (e.g. "If A, then B"). This is thinking. There are, however, certain types of *noemata* sometimes called "beholdings" (*theoremata*), that do not leave any impress on the *nous*, because they are not of created things that have shape, form, or logical content. These are *noemata* of God, who is beyond shape, form, and logical content. They are a vision of the invisible God.

It is for this reason that Evagrius insists that any contemplation of created reality removes the mind from the possibility of direct encounter of God: it is already engaged in another activity that is keeping it occupied. This is a difficult concept for a generation that has coined the neologism "multi-tasking" and which glorifies the

[28]I am indebted to Columba Stewart, "Imageless Prayer in Evagrius Ponticus" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 173–204 for the following discussion of Evagrian epistemology.

multiplication of activities, but Evagrius is aware of the radical limitations that confine human nature. Although one may try to participate in more than one conversation at a time (for example, talk with someone as music plays or a television mumbles, or read the church bulletin as the liturgy is being conducted), one could never speak two words at precisely the same time or read two words at precisely the same time. These actions must occur in sequence; it is impossible for them to occur simultaneously. One is not seeing God at the moment that one is looking elsewhere.

For this reason Evagrius insists that even lofty, contemplative activities such as meditating the very reasons of an object's existence, that is, the relation of the object to God and God's purpose for creating it, obstruct noetic prayer because such activities "leave their impress and [their] form on the mind[,] and lead it far way from God."[29] Noetic prayer is gazing only upon God, and this activity is so demanding that Evagrius insists one must stop thinking even about invisible realities such as the virtues or an angelic life, because they are not God. "Even if the mind has transcended the contemplation of corporeal nature, it has not yet beheld perfectly the place of God, for it can be occupied with the knowledge of intelligible objects and so be involved with their multiplicity."[30]

The mind's highest functions are enabled only when one is completely purified of all passions and all personal or material concerns. This is why Evagrius teaches that "you cannot practice pure prayer while entangled in material things (cf. 2 Tim 2.4) and agitated by continuous concerns, for prayer is the laying aside of mental representations."[31] The mind is capable of only one task at a time and you must choose which it will be. "It is not possible to run while

[29]Evagrius *On Prayer* 56.
[30]Evagrius *On Prayer* 57.
[31]Evagrius *On Prayer* 70.

tied up, nor can a mind that is a slave to passions behold the place of spiritual prayer, for it is dragged and spun round by impassioned mental representation and it cannot achieve a stable state."[32]

It is not only folly to attempt grasping God by the mind, it is idolatry, the gravest of all sins. There is no greater temptation than to create a God after our own image and one that serves our interests and aspirations. Many wars have been fought, and many have been killed, in the name of God. This kind of idolatry must be eradicated at its very foundation, in the depth of our soul. Evagrius' treatise *On Prayer* warns of "the presumption of rashly localizing the Divinity,"[33] because it recognizes that we are accustomed to using our minds to comprehend reality. Evagrius admits "the mind, which is habituated to associating with mental representations, is easily brought into submission, and as it eagerly moves on towards immaterial and formless knowledge, it can be deceived into taking smoke to be light."[34] A practitioner of noetic prayer must be ever wary of these temptations and dangers, and avoid them.

Many will recoil from such a teaching, because it appears nihilistic, destructive of thought and intellectual activity. It also appears to contradict the rich symbolism of Orthodox liturgical rites. Neither of these assessments, however, is accurate. First, Evagrius was not nihilistic, rather he valued creation and human cognition. He said,

> The Lord has confided to the human person the mental representations of this age, like sheep to a good shepherd. . . . For assistance he has joined to him (viz. the human person) the irascible part and the concupiscible part so that through the irascible he may put to flight the mental representations that are the

[32]Evagrius *On Prayer* 71.
[33]Evagrius *On Prayer* 67.
[34]Evagrius *On Prayer* 68.

wolves and that through the concupiscible *he may love the sheep,* even if he is often cast about by the rain and winds. .... In addition to these things he has also given him a pasturage so that he may pasture the sheep ... in order that from this flock he may have nourishment and clothing and that he may gather the mountain grass, for scripture says, "who pastures a flock and does not feed on its milk?"[35]

Good and beautiful thoughts both nourish and adorn our minds, and they are to be guarded "night and day" and snatched "from the mouth of the lion and the bear" if they are ever taken prey by the passions.[36] Second, Evagrius did not promote noetic prayer at the expense of psalmody, the form of prayer we experience in church and engage in privately.[37] One scholar recently noted that "Evagrius' spiritual teaching presumes that wordless, imageless prayer takes place in an oscillating, dynamic relationship with word-filled, image-filled psalmody and biblical meditation, from which it regularly arises and into which it quickly returns."[38] Noetic prayer was complementary and formed only part of the total cycle of prayer. Liturgy, symbols, and icons remain essential to worship. At home, you may recite words of prayer before icons, but perhaps close your eyes on occasion and slip into silent reverie. Eventually, you will open your eyes and resume your words once again.

Evagrius teaches that one must listen and speak to God, and not simply think about him or attempt to grasp him with the mind. Knowledge of God must be different from other forms of knowl-

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[35]Evagrius *On Thoughts* 17, emphasis mine. The final scriptural allusion is to 1 Cor 9.7.

[36]Evagrius *On Thoughts* 17.

[37]On psalmody, see above n. 4.

[38]Dysinger, *Psalmody,* 196.

edge. It must be a direct experience, which Evagrius described as a vision. This vision does not depend on the ability of the mind to think or know, but beholds God immediately, without any mediation or intermediary. So long as your mind is engaged in activities of thinking or knowing things of this world, which are the natural activities of the mind, it is not engaged in the highest activity of noetic prayer.

Noetic prayer reminds us that if we truly wish to know another person, we must stop talking and begin listening. You must not assume anything about God, but rather await God's self-revelation. This is demonstrated in an anecdote concerning a modern practitioner of noetic prayer, Elder Paisios of Mount Athos. A visitor once asked him whether during prayer he should focus on his icons or the words of prayer, and Elder Paisios responded "neither of the two; rather, think of your sins." His words imply that remembering one's sins will stir the gratitude and openness towards God that is required for true communication, or true prayer, through which one "becomes equal to the angels, in longing to see the face of the Father who is in heaven."39

## A SACRIFICE OF LOVE

There is one final dimension of noetic prayer that deserves discussion and which Evagrius developed with profound theological insight. Evagrius argued that noetic prayer is the equivalent of an offering or even a sacrifice unto God. This might seem a banal point

39Evagrius *On Prayer* 113, cf. Mt 18.10. This, of course, is followed by a warning against egotistical desires: "Hold no desire to see angels or powers or Christ with the senses, lest you go completely insane, taking a wolf to be the shepherd and worshipping your enemies, the demons." Evagrius *On Prayer* 115.

for Christians who have been proclaiming prayer a spiritual sacrifice in their liturgy for centuries. Evagrius, however, was among the first to develop this remarkable idea and to propose ways in which the practices of Israel were fulfilled in the Church, the New Israel. He suggested that noetic prayer is analogous to various aspects of Old Testament ritual offering and sacrifice.

For example, Evagrius likened noetic prayer unto incense. Scripture indicates that incense was integral to religious worship (see Ex 30.1–10 and Lk 1.8–12), and incense is an often-used metaphor for prayer. For example, Psalm 141.2 states "let my prayer be counted as incense before you," and Revelation 5.8 states that the "twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Taking his cue from these passages, Evagrius said, "The pure mind is an incense burner at the time of prayer when it touches upon no sensible object. According to virtue we will be one on the eighth day; according to knowledge, on the last day."[40] Elsewhere he wrote, "The smoke of incense sweetens the air, and the prayer of the abstinent person presents a sweet odor to God."[41] Evagrius' metaphor suggests that the smell of this sweet incense arose only from a fire of self-purification, in which one purged the soul of sin and passion. Unless one had renounced the passions, noetic prayer was impossible. He warned that, "to the extent that you have not renounced the passions but your mind resists virtue and truth, you will not find the fragrance of incense in your breast."[42] Like a prophet of Israel,

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[40]Evagrius *Reflections* 6. Evagrius is clearly referring to noetic prayer, because it is only then that one touches upon no sensible object. This passage also alludes to the personal encounter with God that occurs in noetic prayer, because the eighth day refers to the resurrection of Jesus, and the last day refers to full knowledge of the Trinity that will be revealed.

[41]Evagrius *Eight Thoughts* 1.26; cf. Rev 8.4.

[42]Evagrius *On Prayer* 141.

Evagrius also used incense as a metaphor for disingenuous prayer, warning that, "the prayer of the irascible person is an abominable incense offering (cf. Is 1.13)."[43] According to Evagrius, it is better that one entangled in the passions should not attempt noetic prayer.

Evagrius also incorporated the imagery of an altar into his metaphor of noetic prayer as an offering. "If he who wants for nothing and remains impartial did not receive the man who approached the altar with his gift until he had been reconciled with the neighbor who held a grievance against him (Mt 5.23–4), consider how great a watchfulness and discernment is required for us to offer at the intelligible altar incense acceptable to God."[44] Just as approaching the altar in the Old Testament required a certain spiritual condition, so noetic prayer required forgiveness, reconciliation, and the absence of anger. Evagrius recognized that if you cannot forgive and be reconciled with your neighbor, or if you feel the slightest stirring of anger upon seeing him, then deep within your soul you harbor a pride that destroys the value of your prayer and sacrifice. Such a spiritual condition precludes an approach to the altar of noetic prayer. Evagrius noted that, "the gift of the resentful person is a blemished sacrifice (cf. Lev 22.22) and does not approach the consecrated altar."[45] This is why he also says, "The virtue of a vainglorious person is like a flawed sacrificial victim: it cannot be brought to the altar of God."[46]

Evagrius' use of sacrificial imagery is also highly suggestive for his understanding of noetic prayer. The Greek word for sacrifice, *thysia*, is derived from *thuô*, which means "to offer by burning" either meat or drink to the gods.[47] Evagrius spoke on several occa-

43 Evagrius *Eight Thoughts* 4.18.
44 Evagrius *On Prayer* 147.
45 Evagrius *Eight Thoughts* 4.19.
46 Evagrius *Eight Thoughts* 7.16.
47 Liddell-Scott, s.v. "*thuō*," I.1.

sions of using fire or heat to destroy evil thoughts and, thus, to purify the mind to encounter God.[48] The fire in a sacrifice destroys the gift, thus distinguishing the ritual from that of the offering, wherein a gift is merely presented (although the two terms are often used synonymously today). Since the gifts to be burned were often living animals, *thuô* also came to mean "to slay" or "to slaughter."[49] Perhaps Evagrius' commitment to prayer was so radical, that it was the equivalent of slaying one's mind. After all, is not the removal of every thought from your mind similar to a slaying of the mind? Just as the lungs require oxygen, so the discursive mind requires thoughts. Quelling or stilling all thoughts is akin to throttling the discursive mind and inducing a fatal asphyxia. For modern man who identifies his very existence with his capacity for thinking—"I think, therefore I am," in the words of Descartes—this is a real death. Perhaps this is why Scripture speaks of dying with Christ (cf. Col 3.3, 2 Tim 2.11, 1 Pet 2.24). But dying with Christ also implies being resurrected with Christ, and Evagrius believed that the highest capacity of the soul was not to think (that would be the second highest capacity of the soul), but to encounter God directly, and this function of the soul can only flourish when the discursive function is temporarily suspended.

It was important for Evagrius and other early Christian thinkers to identify prayer with sacrifice, because according to the Bible, this was the manner by which one established communion with God.

[48]E.g. "As fire melts wax, so goodly vigil melts wicked thoughts" in *To Monks in Monasteries and Communities* 50. *Eulogius* 21.22 speaks of using the "the fiery of torch" of asceticism to chase away evil thoughts; *On Thoughts* 16 says that we should use the "boiling heat of the irascible part." Cf. the cryptic reference in *Eulogius* 19. Most commonly, however, Evagrius uses the metaphor of fire to refer to the eternal punishment of hell, the remembrance of which is also a tonic for the soul and can assist in destroying thoughts.

[49]Liddell-Scott, s.v. "*thuō*," I.2 a, b.

Whenever Israel wished to come "before the Lord," it did so through sacrifice, which was efficacious for different functions (praise, worship, expiation, and so forth), and, probably, for different reasons. For example, a sacrifice could be a gift (to gain the good favor of the recipient),[50] a means of establishing or maintaining communion (by sharing a common meal resulting from the sacrificial victim),[51] or a vicarious offering of the self (identifying yourself with the victim [e.g., by laying on it your hand] to be offered up to God).[52] Christians believed that they had been reconciled unto God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.[53]

Sacrifice alone, however, is insufficient. It requires the appropriate inner disposition as the prophetic tradition and later biblical writings repeatedly remind the believer. God wants the proper ordering of our lives, and does not literally need the gifts or the communion meals: "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High."[54] Hosea reminds us that above all God desires "steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."[55] Both of these qualities were revealed perfectly in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and so the early Christian tradition continued this trajectory. In the first century, St Paul exhorted the believers at Rome to present their bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God," which he equated with a *logike latreia*, or rational worship.[56] In the second century, St Ire-

50 See Ex 23.15 and cf. 2 Kg 5.5.
51 See Lev 3.1–17 and Lev 10.12–15.
52 Lev 3.2.
53 Heb 7.1–10.18.
54 Ps 50.12–13.
55 Hos 6.6.
56 Rom 12.1.

naeus reminded believers that charitable works must be performed with the right intention to be "justly reckoned a pure sacrifice with God."[57] This is because God has no personal need of the items offered, and he wishes that we share them with the poorest of our neighbors so that we "might learn to serve God"; this is why we "should offer a gift at the altar, frequently and without intermission. The altar, then, is in heaven for towards that place are our prayers and oblations directed."[58]

Evagrius was preoccupied with a purely receptive prayer in which none of our own desires would inhibit complete openness to God. This is why he urged his readers capable of praying at such a high level to pray only for the will of God. "Do not pray for the fulfillment of your own wishes, for they do not necessarily accord with the will of God. But pray rather as you were taught, saying: 'Your will be done' in me (Mt 6.10), and in every matter entreat him in this way that his will be done, for he wills what is good and beneficial for your soul, but you are not necessarily looking for this."[59] Almost ironically he admits that "often in my prayer I have asked for what I thought was good and I persisted in my request, irrationally forcing the will of God and not leaving it up to him to arrange for what he knows will benefit me. However when I got (what I asked for), I later became very annoyed with myself because I had not rather asked for his will to be done, for it did not work out for me as I thought it would."[60]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Evagrius would treat the greatest forms of prayer as the greatest of all sacrifices, the sacrifice

[57]Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.18.4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1965).
[58]Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 4.18.6.
[59]Evagrius *On Prayer* 31.
[60]Evagrius *On Prayer* 32.

not only of our will, but even of our thoughts, hopes, and aspirations. "If you long to practice prayer, renounce absolutely all things so that you may inherit the whole."[61] At the heart of sacrifice is the desire for communion, and communion requires receptivity. How could one be receptive and demanding at the same time? In the final analysis, what is worth demanding, anyway, at the expense of a relationship with God? Thus Evagrius asks, "What good is there besides God? Therefore, let us give back to him all that is ours and it will go well for us."[62] Evagrius took this quite literally, and enjoined his readers, "Go, 'sell your possessions and give to the poor' (Mt 19.21) and 'taking up your cross, deny yourself'(Mt 16.24), so that you may be able to pray free from distraction."[63]

Many will balk at such injunctions as either impossible, because we must provide for ourselves and family members, or hypocritical, because ascetics often rely on donations. But Evagrius and his audience were solitary monks who were not supported by anyone else. They were responsible for providing for themselves (and for elderly or infirm monks) by means of an occupation in the harshest of environments. They were all gainfully self-employed, if you will permit the anachronism. Evagrius, for example, was a manuscript copyist. What distinguished his labor from ours was his commitment to work and to provide for himself without worry and with trust in God's providence. Most self-help books would argue that detachment from possessions is necessary for emotional stability and personal happiness, but Evagrius reminds us that it is the sine qua non of our spiritual life and encounter with God.

This is why the Church assembles weekly in the Eucharist, not merely to offer petitions, but to remind us that communion with God

[61]Evagrius On Prayer 36.
[62]Evagrius On Prayer 33.
[63]Evagrius On Prayer 17.

requires sacrifice. Each Sunday we remember all that the Lord has done for us—"the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming"—and we are moved to eagerly offer everything we have in return, proclaiming, "Thine own of thine own we offer unto you."[64] Evagrius is reminding us that personal prayer also requires sacrifice. This is a difficult lesson about prayer that he had learned from his spiritual father, St Macarius of Alexandria, who taught that prayer is the equivalent of one's own crucifixion, in which one must "Cleave to God the Father and the only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the consubstantial Trinity, God of gods, the king of all the ages. Climb high upon the cross of the Son who is in heaven. Do not come down from that mighty place."[65]

## CONCLUSION

Noetic prayer is often misunderstood as an esoteric exercise, perhaps even a self-absorbed preoccupation that is irrelevant to life in contemporary society. This discussion explains the importance of noetic prayer for the Christian spiritual tradition and why this form of prayer is still practiced by ascetics in the Orthodox Church. Noetic prayer is a call to an encounter with God, which requires virtue, receptivity, and sacrifice. It is a prayer in which "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."[66]

[64]Anaphora of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom. English translation of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, in *Divine Liturgy in English and Greek* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 1985).

[65]Palladius *Lausiac History* 18, in *Four Desert Fathers: Pambo, Evagrius, Macarius of Egypt and Macarius of Alexandria*, Tim Vivian, trans. Palladius Lausiac History 18 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 148.

[66]Rom 8.26.

The greatest endeavors in life can only be sustained by love for something greater than oneself. Noetic prayer is such an endeavor, and Evagrius repeatedly reminded the monk that he would succeed in this effort only with a sincere love for both God and neighbor. According to him, "friendship with God, or the perfect and spiritual love," was required for prayer to become "an activity in 'spirit and truth.' "[67] Evagrius believed that the practitioner of noetic prayer was blessed not because he could concentrate on prayer, but because he "looks with pleasure upon the salvation and progress of all as he would his own," and because he "considers all people as God after God."[68] Evagrius believed that love for one's neighbor is the preeminent virtue that one can acquire in the desert, because a true monk is "one who is separated from all and united with all"[69] and "one who esteems himself as one with all people because he ever believes he sees himself in each person."[70] Although noetic prayer requires withdrawal from society, it does not result in isolation. Rather, it results in communion. Today, Orthodox Christians have embraced noetic prayer again, because they know it unites them with God and joins them with other believers in a fellowship of true and abiding love.

[67]Evagrius *On Prayer* 77.
[68]Evagrius *On Prayer* 122–23.
[69]Evagrius *On Prayer* 124.
[70]Evagrius *On Prayer* 125. For the first four beatitudes, see *On Prayer* 118–21.

# WHAT ARE WE DOING, TALKING ABOUT GOD? THE DISCIPLINE OF THEOLOGY

## John Behr

The discipline of Christian theology is a peculiar discipline. Although we know the oft-repeated statement of Evagrius, that "if you are a theologian you will pray truly and if you pray truly you are a theologian,"[1] we tend to think that "theology" is a matter of "speaking about God"—pretty much as someone studying biology speaks about the phenomenon of life and living creatures. A typical dictionary entry for "theology" will note that the word is comprised of *theos* (God) and *logos* (word/discourse), and so define the word in terms of a discipline that speaks about God, his revelation, and his relation to the world. If we even recall Evagrius' statement, we probably will take it as an injunction to make sure that we are duly reverential in our theological discourse. The possibility that by the high title of "theology" (or even, "prayer") Evagrius might have intended something altogether *other* than the discipline we now practice escapes us, as does the earlier tradition of using the term "theology" (and related terms) in which he stands. Yet the

[1]Evagrius of Pontus *Chapters on Prayer* 60 (61 in the *Philokalia*).

increasingly fractured state of the discipline(s) of theology should prompt us to pause, to reflect on the nature of theology. And, if we take seriously the demand not to take the name of God in vain, this becomes obligatory.

In an important and influential study, George Lindbeck identified three approaches to understanding the language of theology. In the first, doctrinal language functions as "informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities."[2] Such language is the presumption of much of our daily discourse; it is the way that we get by. Although the supposed objectivity and neutrality of scientific discourse is now called into question, the paradigmatic status that science has held since the Enlightenment has meant that other discourses, including theology, have become conformed to this model: unengaged and detached informative statements about things "out there" or in the past, verified through objective means.[3]

The second approach is what Lindbeck described as the "experiential-expressive" approach, which "interprets doctrines as non-informative and non-discursive symbols of inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations." According to Lindbeck, this approach originated with Schleiermacher and continued through Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, and beyond. Although it may not have greatly influenced the various discourses of contemporary Orthodox theology, it would be hard to deny its effect upon the religiosity of many Orthodox Christians, including theologians.

Lindbeck tried to get beyond both of these approaches by suggesting a third, an understanding of theological language that he

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[2]George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 16.

[3]For a critique of the effects of the Enlightenment on the discipline of theology, see A. Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), especially the first two chapters.

styles "cultural-linguistic": here, theological doctrines regulate the language of theology, especially in its worship and prayer. Despite its distinctively Wittgensteinian flavor, Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic" approach does have much to commend it and does, indeed, seem to account for the way in which doctrinal statements functioned in the early centuries of Christianity.[4]

So, however much we might naively think that theological statements are "informative propositions" about God "out there"—as if he were subject to our investigation and scrutiny, to be described by our objective and unengaged words about him—the early Fathers knew very well that God "is not out there," at least if we are using the word "is" in any way commensurate with how we speak about creation and ourselves. St Gregory Palamas noted God "is not a being, if others are beings, and if he is a being, the others are not beings," stating forcefully the implications of the fact that God is the creator of all being and, therefore, not part of "being."[5] As such, we cannot use the word "is" with respect to God in the same manner in which we use it of ourselves or created reality, even if we do so prayerfully. But then, we might wonder, how do we speak "about God"? Even if we take doctrinal statements as "regulating" our discourse, what do we think we are speaking about when we "talk theology," or what we are doing when we "theologize"?

For the early Christians, theology was not a matter of speaking about God. Indeed, the presumption and arrogance of such a discourse—as if we can look upon, and thereby stand over, God to

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[4]Cf. J. Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001) and *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2004); see in particular the Cappadocian analysis of theological language developed in response to Eunomius, *The Nicene Faith*, 267–90.

[5]St Gregory Palamas *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* 78; for a modern attempt to think through the implications of this, see Jean Luc Marion, *God without Being*, trans. T.A. Carlson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

describe him and his activity in neutral, uninvolved terms—would have been shocking to them, if even comprehensible. Rather than speaking about God, "theology" was, more specifically, the affirmation of the divinity of the crucified and exalted Lord, Jesus Christ. As an anonymous writer at the end of the second century put it: in the Scriptures and the writings of many Christians "Christ is spoken of as God" (lit. "Christ is theologized"); likewise "all the psalms and hymns which were written by the faithful from the beginning, hymn Christ as the Word of God, speaking of him as God" (lit. "theologizing him").[6] And, for the Fathers of the early centuries, the writers of Scripture, such as David, are "theologians"[7]; and the apostles, such as Paul, "who speaks of the Savior himself," are also "theologians,"[8] especially the Evangelist John, "the Theologian."[9] They are theologians in a unique and unrepeatable manner, for they spoke and wrote about Christ, and those who "theologize" Christ thereafter do so on the basis of their accounts.[10]

One can perhaps be even more specific. From the end of the second century, the Gospel of John was widely regarded as being the most "spiritual" amongst the Gospels, and the Evangelist thereafter was known in Church tradition as "the Theologian," a title he eventually came to share with St Gregory the Theologian, and later on with St Symeon the New Theologian. While the bestowal of this honorific upon these figures is often explained in terms of their lofty theology and their poetic and forceful writing, a more immediate and specific reason would be that they each "theologized" in a par-

[6] Cited by Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5.28.4–6.
[7] Cf. St Athanasius *Against the Pagans* 46.
[8] St Athanasius *On the Incarnation* 10.
[9] St Athanasius *Against the Pagans* 42.
[10] This was also true, in their own way, of the way in which the Greek poets were regarded at this time; cf. R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), esp. 22–31.

ticular manner. For example, the Gospel of John contains the clearest affirmation that Christ is "my Lord and my God (*ho theos*)." And, St Gregory, unlike St Basil, unabashedly affirmed that, even if the Scriptures do not speak of the Holy Spirit as "God," nevertheless "God" the Spirit is, for that is how the Scriptures describe him, even if not using the specific term *theos*. Further, St Symeon employs a reversal of the biblical affirmation that "God is light" (1 Jn 1.5) when he approaches the Divine Light, asking "My God, is it you?" and he hears the reply "Yes, I am God who became man for your sake and behold I have made you, as you see, and will make you into a god."[11] To understand further the particular nature of theological discourse, we must look more closely at how these first "theologians" spoke about Christ.

## THEOLOGY AS EXEGETICAL CONFESSION OF CHRIST

An obvious fact, whose implications are rarely considered, is that, with one exception (the exception which proves the rule), the disciples are presented in the canonical Gospels as continually failing to understand who Jesus is. The one time that Peter confesses that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mt 16.16)—a confession following which Jesus begins to explain how he must go to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and be raised—Peter is then called "Satan" for attempting to get between Christ and his cross (Mt 16.23). Whatever the disciples heard about Jesus' birth from his mother, or about his baptism from others, whatever divine teachings they themselves

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[11] Jn 20.28; for the other possible uses of *ho theos* for Christ in the New Testament, see *Way to Nicaea*, 58–61; for St Gregory, see *Oration* 31; for St Symeon, see *Ethical Discourse* 5.13–16.

heard from his lips or miracles they saw with their own eyes (even transfigured on Tabor in glory)—they abandoned him at the time of the passion.

Neither did the empty tomb persuade them. When the women arrived at the tomb early in the morning, they were perplexed, not knowing what to make of it being empty; they required an angel to explain what had happened. The Christian faith is not based on the empty tomb, for this "bare fact" requires interpretation: was the body perhaps stolen? The same holds true for the resurrection appearances: when he appears, not only do they not recognize him, but they also start telling him about this Jesus who was put to death, and that the tomb was found empty (Lk 24.22–4). So, the Christian faith is not based on the appearances of the risen Lord.

Only when the crucified and risen Christ opens the Scriptures to them, to show how it was necessary for him to have gone to his passion to enter his glory, do the disciples' hearts began to burn, so that they are prepared to recognize him in the breaking of the bread (Lk 24.28–35). Yet once finally recognized, he disappears: "and their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he vanished out of their sight" (Lk 24.31). At the very moment that the disciples finally encounter Christ knowingly, he passes out of their sight.

From the very beginning, therefore, we are left in anticipation of his coming: the one of whom we previously had no comprehension appears and disappears, or rather disappears in his appearance, creating in us a desire for his coming, a trace of his presence. As St Augustine put it, "Through him [Christ] you sought us when we were not seeking you, but you sought us that we might begin to seek you."[12] And so, as the Apostle Paul put it, we now "forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead," responding to "the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3.13–14), know-

[12] St Augustine *Confessions* 11.2.4.

ing that our "citizenship" is not here on earth, but "in heaven," from which "we await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil 3.20–21).

From the outset, then, Christians have been waiting for the coming of their Lord: not for a "second coming" as something distinct from and other than a "first coming," but simply for his coming, his parousia, his presence. Our habitual language of a "first coming" and a "second coming" tends to separate the two: relegating the first to the past, as something that happened in the history recorded by the Evangelists (who thereby become "historians" rather than "evangelists"); and projecting the second into a yet-to-be-revealed eschatological drama, enacted by the same Christ (but with a different story than the one in which he says "Now is the judgment of the world" in Jn 12.31). Given the manner in which the disciples came to know the Christ, Jesus already appears in the Gospels as "the coming one" (Mt 11.3), the one coming in the name of the Lord (cf. Mt 21.9; Jn 12.13; Ps 117.26 LXX). And we also, in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, confess that he is "again coming" (not that "he will come again," the usual translation, implying a "second" coming).

Reflecting briefly on how it was that the disciples came to know the Christ shifts our focus from knowing Christ from the past to the present and future. It remains for each one of us to respond to his question, "But who do you say that I am?" as we stretch forward in anticipation of meeting the coming Lord, "who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3.21), and increasingly even now become his body here upon earth, so that "when he appears we shall be like him" (1 Jn 3.2).

Besides shifting our focus from the past to the present and the future, most important for our reflection on the nature of theological discourse is to understand how the disciples came to know that Jesus is the Lord, the Son of God. Thereby, we can contemplate the

coming Lord in that same way, and so remain within the apostolic tradition. As we have observed, they did not come to this knowledge through hearing reports about his birth, nor by accompanying him for a period of time. This simply underscores the fact that the usual methods of human knowledge—scientific analysis, historical inquiry, or philosophical reflection—are inadequate when the desired object of knowledge is God. For God is not subject to human, physical, or mental perception, but shows himself as and when he wills, just as the risen Christ comes and goes at his own pleasure. And, as we have seen, he disappears from sight once he is recognized, so that he does not remain as an external object for our scrutiny—even though we are to become his body, his tangible and perceptible presence in this world.

So, neither seeing Christ on the cross, nor the report about the empty tomb, nor the even the encounter with the risen Christ prompted the disciples, finally, to know the Lord: the tomb is empty, but this in itself is ambiguous, and when he appears he is not immediately recognized. Rather, the disciples come to recognize the Lord as the one whose passion is spoken of by the Scriptures (meaning, the "Old Testament"), and who is encountered in the breaking of the bread. Consuming Christ's offering, they become his body. These two complementary ways—the engagement with the Scriptures (understanding how Christ "died according to the Scriptures and was raised according to the Scriptures" [1 Cor 15.3–5]), and the participation in the Lord's meal ("proclaiming his death until he comes" [1 Cor 11.26]) —specify what St Paul claims he had received and then handed down, or "traditioned," to later generations (cf. 1 Cor 11.23, 15.3). These constitute, as it were, the matrix and the sustenance of the Christian tradition, within which theology speaks. From this vantage point, we now look back to the cross, the last publicly visible image, as the sign of victory, while we await the return

of the Lord; as the Apostle Paul said, he would preach nothing else but Christ and him crucified (1 Cor 2.2).

Christian theology proceeds, then, by reflecting upon the crucified and risen Christ understood through the medium of the Scriptures. This one is "the image of the invisible God," "in whom the fullness of divinity dwelt bodily" (Col 1.15, 2.9). There is no surplus of divinity, as it were, elsewhere, to be discovered by any other means. Therefore, Christian theology is intrinsically confessional and exegetical. It is confessional in the sense that it does not affirm a mere "historical" statement, for instance, that Jesus "was crucified under Pontius Pilate" —something that anyone on hand that day could have verified. Instead, a "theological" statement affirms that the one who was crucified is the Son of God. This is a confession of faith. This confession, moreover, is exegetical, for the disciples were able to confess this only once the risen Christ had opened the Scriptures to them. As a confession, it further demands affirmation from those who profess their belief: as St Athanasius put it, "the one who ascended the cross is the Word of God," and this is only truly demonstrated by those who "put on the faith of the cross" and, by their death in baptism and manner of living thereafter, become the body of Christ born again in the Virgin Mother, the Church.[13]

This proclamation of the gospel "according to the Scriptures," forms the basis for the establishment, by the end of the second century, of catholic or orthodox Christianity, with a "canon of truth"— a guideline which facilitates (rather than curtails) the gospel proclamation—and a visible tradition of such proclamation through a succession of teachers, priests/bishops.[14] The canon of truth provided the framework for the encounter with the Christ pro-

[13]St Athanasius *Against the Pagans* 1, *On the Incarnation* 28; cf. Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, ch. 4 (The Virgin Mother) and ch. 5 (Glorify God in Your Body).
[14]Cf. *Way to Nicaea*, 7–48.

claimed by the apostles, an encounter that takes place through the engagement with the matrix of imagery provided by the Scriptures and is nourished by the eucharistic celebration.

Moreover, this dynamic presentation of the crucified and exalted Christ is the theological (not the historical, for this is now lost to us, if it were ever explicit) rationale behind the collection of texts by the end of the second century that we now know as the "New Testament." The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are each centered upon the passion of Christ and they proclaim their message by drawing upon the treasury of Scripture, i.e., the Old Testament. In the opening of the Gospel of Mark, the very "beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ" is illustrated by a passage from Isaiah (Mk 1.1–3; Mal 3.1; Is 40.3), whereas in the Gospel of John, the Evangelist simply presents Christ affirming: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me" (Jn 5.46).

The crucified and risen Christ, proclaimed in this way by the apostles "in accordance with Scripture," is the starting-point and end-point of theological reflection. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1.8). He is the one by whom all things were created, and the end towards which all things tend, being recapitulated in him as the head of all things. This, indeed, is the plan of God from all eternity (Eph 1.9–10). Yet this eternal plan is known only at the end: "He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest at the end of time for your sake" (1 Pet 1.20). The beginning and the end of all things not only coincide in Christ and as Christ, but, as St Irenaeus puts it, he is the beginning who appears at the end.[15] Christ is revealed, in this way, at the end, and so we, in the present, are still in the process of "learning Christ," as the Apostle Paul puts it (Eph 4.20). We look back to the last image that we have of Christ in this world—his cross and passion, as

[15] St Irenaeus *Against the Heresies* 1.10.3.

preached by the apostles "in accordance with Scripture"—yet stretch forward to encounter the eschatological Lord.

Understanding theology as primarily an exegetical confession about Christ enables us to reintegrate systematic, or dogmatic, theology and the study of Scripture, disciplines that, during the past centuries, have become separated, to the impoverishment of both.[16] Dogmatics, or systematic theology, (and consequently Patristics, when the Fathers are read for theology) has been undertaken as an abstract discourse about God, only occasionally providing a quotation from Scripture. Similarly, students of Scripture set out on a quest to discover the "real history" behind or of the text, resulting in the discovery of a plethora of "real Jesuses." The writings of Scripture are certainly historical documents, set in their own historical context, and all the disciplines of historical-critical study can illuminate their possible meanings. But, when read as Scripture, they have been taken by Christians, from the beginning, as speaking of Christ, for he alone is the Word of God, whose full divinity theology has sought to understand, explicate, and defend.

## THEOLOGY AS A TRANSFORMATIVE WORD

As exegetical and confessional, rather than abstract and uninvolved, discourse, theology also speaks a transformative word. By considering how the disciples came to know Christ, we realize anew the unity of theology and scriptural exegesis. By now reflecting on when this occurred, we find, once again, what the hymnography for the feast of the Three Great Hierarchs describes as "the pastoral power of their theology."

[16]Cf. E. Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

Over the past few centuries, a split has occurred in the teaching of theology in theological schools and universities between "theology proper" and "pastoral theology."[17] Having reduced theology to an abstract, academic discipline, theological schools have increasingly turned to disciplines developed within the "social sciences" to fulfill the role of a "pastoral theology." As with historical-critical scriptural scholarship, these disciplines have much to offer, but they are a poor substitute for the transforming word that is the gospel, that which enables us to see in the very depth of our brokenness, sin, and death (rather than elsewhere) the presence of God, transforming our reality, redeeming, and recreating it.

Various factors have combined to reduce theology to abstract discourse from which "pastoral" points need to be drawn. One key factor is the systematization of theology over many centuries into handbooks of dogmatic theology, which are then drawn upon to categorize debates and writings of the early centuries. Until recently, textbooks on church history and patristics would unthinkingly divide the theological reflection of the early Church into various periods corresponding to modern systematic categories. For example, the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century (clarifying how we speak of unity and multiplicity in God, a "divine arithmetic" as it were) were followed by the christological debates of the following centuries (which explained how one of the divine Persons became incarnate). In the latter part of the twentieth century, both of these debates were quite often subsumed under an overarching project that corresponded with a contemporary issue, such as articulating a notion of authentic personhood. With these presuppositions, the patristic distinction between "theology" and "economy" was

explained in a particularly modern manner: the former being language about God as he is in himself, the latter describing his activity of creation and within creation in human history, culminating in the incarnation.

With theology defined in this way, the "pastoral" dimension of theology (for by now "pastoral theology" had become a completely other discipline, drawing upon the social sciences) becomes a matter of how one might explain, for instance, the meaning and significance of the term "homoousios" to the average lay member of a community, or, alternatively, how one might simplify the complexities of the fourth-century debates to make them comprehensible to say the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed with some degree of understanding. Needing to be "made relevant" in such ways, this kind of theology is clearly shown to be irrelevant: the term "homoousios" speaks of the mysterious inner-trinitarian relations, and the Nicene Creed is a historically situated statement.

The Fathers themselves would have regarded such a distinction between "theology" and "economy" as being as divisive as the Christology rejected at the Council of Ephesus, which separated divinity (God as he is in himself) from humanity (what God has done as a human). As we have seen, Christ "is theologized" on the basis of the economy, specifically the passion. Only in light of the passion—the crucifixion and exaltation, now understood through the medium of the Scriptures, looking back to the cross—do we come to know that Christ is indeed the Son of God.[18] There is, for a Christian, no way of speaking "about God" apart from by reference to the

[18]See, for example, the classic passages of St Athanasius and St Gregory the Theologian, discussed in Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 208–15 and 348–52 respectively, and also for further discussion 475–81. It is also important to remember that for the early Christians, the passion encompassed both the crucifixion and the resurrection, or rather that these were not even split up in the way that we now tend to do. For a full exploration of this, see Behr, *The Mystery of Christ*, ch. 1.

cross: as the Apostle himself declared, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2.2).

Thus, the fourth-century assertion that the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father should not be taken as an attempt to define how two persons relate to each other "out there," in the articulation of a "Trinitarian theology," but as an affirmation: what we see in Christ, as proclaimed by the apostles, is what it is to be God, yet other than the one he calls Father; and this is known only in and through the Spirit, who is also what it is to be God. Likewise, the Chalcedonian definition does not attempt to articulate a better metaphysics of personhood. Rather, it affirms that divinity and humanity are found together with the same "face," in the same "being." We do not have to look "to this" to see what it is to be God, nor "to that" to see what it is to be human, for both are revealed in one and the same: as the definition puts it: "without confusion, change, division, or separation."

The fact that Christ reveals to us his Father and shows us what it is to be divine by an action that is all-too-human—death—makes all theology a transformative, and truly pastoral, discourse. What we saw earlier about the passion (and the cross as its visible form) being the turning point for theological reflection has profound implications, not only for how theological language speaks, but also for what it does. The one who before the passion was known by the disciples as human, after the passion is recognized by them (through the opening of the Scriptures) to be divine—the same one. Forcefully stated, this means that in and through the action that expresses all the weakness, impotence, and futility of our created human nature—our subjection to death—Christ shows himself to be truly divine, voluntarily taking this upon himself.

As one tries to comprehend this, one is simply at a loss for words. Perhaps not surprising, then, is our all-too-human response

to the revelation of God in the crucified and exalted Christ, under-
stood through the Scriptures by the power of the Spirit, to talk about
something else—to make theology into an abstract discourse or, like
Peter before the passion, to try to separate Christ from the cross. In
one way or another, all the various heresies against which the
Fathers fought attempted to dissolve the apparent paradox of Christ:
what it is to be God through how he lived and died (or rather, died
and lived, for his death enabled the disciples to understand what he
did before) as a human being. The Docetists denied that he was
truly human, claiming that he only appeared to be such. Arius
denied that he was truly divine, for how could one who is as divine
as the Father suffer in such a manner? Diodore, Theodore, and
Nestorius, though affirming his full humanity in a manner palat-
able to today's taste, do so at the expense of separating his divinity
from his humanity: Christ no longer shows us what it is to be divine
in the way that he is human, and so we remain, once again, sepa-
rated from God.

"Man shall not see God and live" (Ex 33.20) is the emphatic tes-
timony of Scripture. Even in the case of the Incarnate Word, Jesus
Christ, our recognition of him coincides with his disappearance
from sight. What we are left to contemplate is his activity, which St
Gregory of Nyssa describes as "the transcendent power of divinity."
As God is the creator of all, this transcendent power can only be
manifest in that which is other than he. In fact, St Gregory contin-
ues, this is the central mystery of the apostolic proclamation: "All
who preach the Word point out the marvel of the mystery in this
respect: that 'God was manifested in the flesh' [1 Tim 3.16], that 'the
Word was made flesh' [Jn 1.14], that 'the Light shone in the dark-
ness' [Jn 1.5], 'the Life tasted death' (Heb 2.9), and all such decla-
rations which the heralds of the faith announce, whereby is
increased the marvel of him who manifested the superabundance

of his power by means external to his own nature."[19] Beheld in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the transcendent power of divinity manifested in that which is not divine—in flesh, in darkness, and in death. Yet within this manifestation is simultaneously their transformation: the darkness no longer remains dark but is illumined; Christ's death has become the source of life to all those who take up their cross to die to the world and to sin; and human flesh is now flesh of the divine Word of God, and becomes Word. For we perceive the Incarnate Word in the apostolic proclamation of the crucified and exalted Christ, while the place where the Word becomes incarnate is now those who confess him, who are his body.

This transformative power of the Word of God is at work now in the confession of Christ. After the passion, finally understanding the Scriptures, the reverse side of the disciples' confession about Christ is their confession about their own complicity in his crucifixion. Peter must affirm three times that he loves Christ, corresponding to his threefold denial of Christ, in both events standing by a charcoal fire (Jn 18.18, 21.9). The reference to the charcoal fire, the glowing coal, is meant to recall to our minds the vision of Isaiah: after seeing the Lord enthroned in his heavenly temple, he cried out, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts"; he then saw a seraphim place in his mouth a burning coal taken from the altar, and heard the words "Behold this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, and your sins forgiven" (Is 6.1–7). Likewise, before the persecutor Saul becomes the Apostle Paul, he is confronted by the Lord asking, "Why do you perse-

[19] St Gregory of Nyssa *Against Eunomius* 3.3.35 [3]; for further discussion of this profound text see Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 435–45; and more briefly, *The Mystery of Christ*, 33–40.

cute me?" and is converted, recovering his sight and receiving baptism and the Holy Spirit through one of the persecuted members of the body of Christ (Acts 9.1–19). Continuing to explore the Scriptures in light of the encounter with the risen Christ, we begin to understand the full scope of this transcendent and transformative work of the eternal, timeless God, to the point that we begin to understand *all things* in its light: Adam is made, as the Apostle put it, already as "a type of the one to come" (Rom 5.14), and creation itself turns around the still axis of the cross.

The encounter with Christ turns all our previous understanding upside down. The disciples were not expecting the kind of Messiah that Jesus turned out to be; at most they were hoping for a political leader, one who would restore the kingdom to Israel (cf. Lk 24.21; Acts 1.6). Nor did they think of themselves as held fast by sin and death. Paul indeed states categorically that, when persecuting the church, he was "blameless as to righteousness under the law" (Phil 3.6). But once persuaded that Christ is indeed the Savior of all, he could only conclude that all stood in need of salvation; only now could he contrast Adam, through whose disobedience sin and death entered the world, with Christ, whose righteousness has become the means of life (Rom 5.12–14). The solution comes first, and then the problem is discerned.[20] So-called "salvation history," the narrative unfolded in Scripture from the creation and the fall onwards, is told from the perspective of the cross. Origen, noting that the Scriptures were not read in this way prior to the proclamation of the gospel, affirmed, "since the Savior has come and has caused the gospel to be embodied, he has by the gospel made all things as gospel."[21] Making all things as gospel by the gospel, theology is not only exegetical and confessional, but also evangelical

[20] See Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, ch. 3.
[21] Origen *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 1.33.

in a fuller sense than is usually given to that term: not just procla-mation, but transformation.

The transforming vision that the encounter with Christ effects with respect to the comprehension of the Scriptures effects a simi-lar transformation in our own lives. Before the encounter with the Christ proclaimed according to the Scriptures, we do not under-stand how we are sinful, nor even that we are sinful. We might know that we have some problems, but we usually think we can overcome them, should we want to (through the means offered us by various therapies and counseling, should we need them). Also clear to us is that the world is beset by problems; but if we are honest, we would probably say that, if only everyone were to agree with us, most of these problems would be resolved. That we are sinful, broken, and subject to death, to the very core of our being, is something that we can only begin to comprehend in the light of Christ, a light which simultaneously forgives, redeems, and recreates.

The "self" that we are is constituted by all the various experi-ences that we have had, told from the vantage point of the present, and the past acting in the present—in ways of which we are largely unaware, and to which we are subject unknowingly and involuntar-ily. But an encounter with Christ provides a new, yet eternal, van-tage point from which to narrate one's own past: we are invited to see our own past retold as nothing less than our own "salvation his-tory." In this nothing is left aside or glossed over as being too shame-ful or painful, something that we would preferably forget, but which, even as "forgotten," continues to act negatively in the pres-ent. Rather, just as in and through that which is all-too-human—death—Christ shows himself to be God, so also in and through our sinfulness and brokenness we come to know the transforming and loving power of God; not that we should thereby sin some more, as Paul warns (Rom 6.1–2), but to see ever more clearly how deep our

brokenness extends. "It is," St Isaac of Syria affirmed, "a spiritual gift of God to be able to perceive one's own sins."[22] Indeed, he claims, "the one who is conscious of his sins is greater than the one who profits the world by the sight of his countenance. The one who sighs over his soul for but one hour is greater than the one who raises the dead by his prayer while dwelling among human beings. The one who is deemed worthy to see himself is greater than the one who is deemed worthy to see the angels, for the latter has communion through his bodily eyes, but the former through the eyes of his soul."[23] To plumb the depth of our fallen condition is to scale the heights of divine love.

The more we are given the grace to see in this way, the more we begin to understand how everything is encompassed within the divine works of God: standing in the light of Christ, we can see him as having led us through our whole past, preparing us to encounter him. He alone knows the reason why he has led each of us on our particular path, for we walk by faith not by sight (2 Cor 5.7), but a faith that all things are in the hands of Christ, and that "in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8.28).

In this way, then, the discourse of theology is not only exegetical and confessional, but a living and active word. It does not merely report what happened in the past, nor pretend to describe, objectively and in an uninvolved manner, a God who is "out there" and his dealings with creation. It is nothing less than the proclamation of the Word of God to this world, allowing it to be at work through us here and now. Such theology is too important to be left to the "theologians," in the modern sense of that term. It is the calling of everyone who would respond to Christ, who would be a Christian,

[22]St Isaac *Ascetical Homilies* 74 (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984).

[23]St Isaac *Ascetical Homilies* 64.

who would allow the transcendent power of God to be at work in them and through them, transforming them and the world in which they live, by "speaking" this divine discourse.

# UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL CARE IN THE EARLY CHURCH[1]

## George E. Demacopoulos

"Pastoral care" is a phrase that reflects the efforts of religious leaders to improve the spiritual condition of those in their care. In the Orthodox tradition, these efforts have historically included private consultations (such as confession and bereavement counseling), group instructions (such as sermons and catechetical instruction), and philanthropic activities (such as feeding the poor or caring for widows). Within these broad parameters, however, those charged with the care of souls have historically employed very different techniques to achieve the desired result.

This variation continues today, especially in the United States where the diversity of pastoral style can take very different forms. At one end of the pastoral spectrum, for example, some priests appear "monastic" in their approach: they wear cassocks, promote strict guidelines for fasting, and take traditional/conservative posi-

[1] Portions of this essay appear in a more detailed form in the introduction to *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

tions on controversial issues. At the other end, there are priests who dress casually, are less likely to emphasize ascetic behavior, and who adopt more progressive/liberal attitudes toward ethical questions.[2] Given the frequency with which priests move from one parish to another in Orthodox churches in the United States, this variation in pastoral style can lead to considerable confusion among the laity in those parishes where a "liberal" priest comes to a parish after a "conservative" one, or vice versa.

This essay foregrounds the present diversity in pastoral care found in the Orthodox parishes in the United States, by assessing the various pastoral traditions that existed in the early church. As we will see, there was, for a period of time, a deep separation between pastoral traditions in the early church. We will also see, however, that this separation gave way to a constructive middle ground. It is this middle ground that became the dominant model for pastoral care in the Byzantine Church.

Perhaps the most dramatic event in the history of Christianity was the conversion of St Constantine to Christianity in the early part of the fourth century. Although the end of persecution was an important liberation for the Church, pastorally speaking, his conversion produced something of a crisis. In the wake of Constantine's conversion, thousands of new converts flooded into the Church. Many of these would-be Christians were perceived (perhaps accurately) by their contemporaries to be lacking the depth of faith that had been possessed by the pre-Constantinian community.[3] To this end, most historians of the period believe that the rapid growth of monasticism in the later fourth century was an attempt

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[2] Obviously this characterizes the two poles of a spectrum, not the majority who remain in the middle.

[3] The threat of martyrdom prevented nominal Christianity. In short, few were willing to risk their lives for something that they only tacitly believed.

by the more rigorous members to return to the struggle of the earliest Christians. As the fifth-century author St John Cassian understood it, the spread of monasticism was a revival of the purity of the ancient Church.[4]

One consequence of these developments was that a distinction emerged within the Church between the parish and the monastery. To be sure, both were part of the same Church: theologically there was no separation; what distinguished these communities was the extent of their *askesis*—asceticism. In the earliest Christian communities, celibates and married Christians typically lived and worshipped together, each practicing a form of asceticism appropriate to their situation. In brief, asceticism is a method of self-control that is cultivated to varying degrees by Christians to root out those things that bring "worldly" pleasure (e.g. food, sex, wealth, and fame) and to redirect their energies toward the worship of God.[5] As early as the New Testament, Christian authors had encouraged their readers, married and unmarried alike, to adopt ascetic disciplines (e.g. almsgiving, fasting, and the temporary cessation of sexual activity).[6] At the time of Constantine's conversion, a celibate's asceticism would have been different from his or her lay co-religionists' only by degree.[7] In the wake of Constantine's conversion, however, the difference

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[4]John Cassian *Conferences* 18.5. For an English translation of the Latin text, see Boniface Ramsey, trans., *John Cassian: The Conferences*, Ancient Christian Writers Series (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997).

[5]For the scholarly debate over an acceptable definition of asceticism, see Vincent Wimbush, "Introduction," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 1–11.

[6]For example, Mt 19.3–12 and 1 Cor 7 encourage celibacy; Mt 19.16–30 establishes poverty as a prerequisite to spiritual perfection; Gal 5.17–25 promotes temperance and long-suffering; and Mt 6.16 encourages fasting.

[7]A monk would be permanently chaste, theoretically poor, and likely to live apart from lay Christians, either by himself or among a group of other professed ascetics.

between professed ascetics and married Christians expanded on both sides: monastic Christians withdrew from cities and their lay brothers and sisters as the distinction between Christian and Roman became less clear. Some monks felt as though the lay community had become too comfortable with the secular world; some lay Christians believed that Christ had not required asceticism of everyone.

We can contrast the intense life of monastic asceticism with the progressively institutionalized, imperial, and less rigorous practice of married Christians. To accommodate the increasingly differentiated pastoral needs of these communities, the practice of pastoral care evolved along two distinct trajectories. One focused on the lay community and was directed by the clergy emphasizing doctrinal instruction, the distribution of charity, and the celebration of the sacraments. The second developed in a monastic setting, taking a more personal and interactive approach through the spiritual father-spiritual disciple relationship. For simplicity, I will refer to these pastoral traditions as the clerical and the ascetic traditions.[8] But before we explore the specific patterns in detail, it is important to recognize that each tradition had very different understandings for how one achieved a position of authority.

## THE CRITERIA FOR AUTHORITY

The difference between the clerical and ascetic models is most visible in their understanding of authority and the selection of new leaders. Most people who self-identified as Christians in the fourth

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[8] I am not suggesting that the pastoral initiatives that I associate with the clergy were only employed by ordained priests or that every cleric endorsed them. Likewise, I am not implying that every ascetic Christian understood spiritual direction to comprise the same elements.

century would have acknowledged the authority of the clergy. Both 1&2 Timothy and Titus made provisions for the ordination of bishops and deacons, thereby establishing criteria for their election and identifying many of their responsibilities.[9] In the letters of St Ignatius of Antioch (a bishop and martyr during the early years of the second century), we find an emphasis on the authority of the bishop. For St Ignatius, the bishop who professed the apostolic faith could discern right from wrong and isolate Orthodox truth from heretical teaching.[10]

Between the second and the fourth century, the theory of apostolic succession emerged to authenticate episcopal teaching and power. Though initially employed to critique heretical positions, the concept of apostolic succession cemented the notion that the Orthodox clergy possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit.[11] As such, the bishop who was rightly ordained was mystically endowed to serve as Christ's agent among the faithful. By the fourth century, there was little denying that authority lay with the episcopate.

It was the rite of ordination that served as the source of pastoral and spiritual potency in the cleric-oriented model. Writing near the close of the fourth century, St John Chrysostom connected the authority of the priesthood to ordination. "The work of the priest is done on earth, but it is ranked among heavenly ordinances. And this is only right, for no man, no angel, no archangel, no other created power, but the Holy Spirit itself ordained this succession, and persuaded men, while still remaining in the flesh, to represent the min-

[9]1 Tim 3.1–13; Titus 1.5–16.

[10]For example, see Ignatius *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3–5. For an English translation, see Michael Holmes, trans., *Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

[11]Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.3.4; Tertullian *On the Prescription against Heretics* 32. For English translations of these texts, refer to the Ante-Nicene Fathers Series, which are readily available on-line.

istry of angels."[12] Through the sacraments, especially baptism and the Eucharist, St Chrysostom reasoned, bishops and priests conferred salvation to the whole Christian body.[13] And they alone possessed the ability to "bind and loose" (cf. Mt 16.19)—in other words, through their priestly office, they had the authority to forgive sins.[14]

The link between the sacraments and episcopal authority went back to at least the third century and probably earlier. A third-century Christian text known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* offers a clear connection: "but honor the bishops, who have loosed you from sins, who by the water regenerated you, who filled you with the Holy Spirit, who reared you with the word as with milk, who bred you up with doctrine, who confirmed you with admonition, and made you to partake of the holy Eucharist of God, and made you partakers and joint heirs of the promise of God."[15] By presiding over the sacraments, the clergy both functionally and symbolically established its leadership within the Christian community.

Though most clerics agreed that ordination was the foundation of their authority, the criteria by which they selected new candidates varied considerably at times. According to 1 Timothy, a bishop "must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one

[12]John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood* 3.4. For an English translation of this text, see Graham Neville, trans., *John Chrysostom: Six Books on the Priesthood*, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, reprinted 1996).

[13]John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood* 3.5.
[14]Ibid. St John typically uses the vague term ἱεροσύνης (priesthood), which implies both the priest and the bishop. See Malingrey, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Sur le sacerdoce* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 72–73.
[15]*Didascalia* 2.33. For a translation of the Syriac text, see R. H. Connolly, trans., *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929).

who rules his own house well, having his children in submission."[16] When St Ignatius wrote to St Polycarp (also a bishop and martyr of the early second century), he added the criterion of Orthodoxy to this list of moral qualifications.[17]

The third-century *Didascalia* records a more lengthy analysis of the criteria for episcopal election. Many of its injunctions are an expansion of the moral requirements listed in 1 Timothy. But by the third century, the very nature of clerical service had changed, and the bishop now controlled not only the purse of the community, but also the ability to excommunicate those whom he deemed to be in violation of the Church's standards.[18] It was probably for this reason that the text takes such great care in establishing the moral and ascetic qualifications of the bishop.[19]

The *Didascalia* requires that the bishop be able to explain every aspect of the faith to his flock.[20] He must also perceive the distinct needs of individuals and provide the appropriate pastoral instruction (whether it be doctrinal information, admonition, or consolation).[21] To help ensure these qualifications, the text establishes a minimum age of fifty for episcopal election and recommends that the candidate be a man of good education (though exceptions for both requirements are anticipated).[22]

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[16] 1 Tim 3.2–4.

[17] Ignatius *Epistle to Polycarp* 3. For an English translation, see Michael Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers.*

[18] *Didascalia*, 2.25. See Georg Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das kirchliche Amt in der syrischen Didaskalia* (Münster: Ashendorffe Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1988), 34–100.

[19] See Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 29–32.

[20] *Didascalia* 2.25.

[21] *Didascalia* 2.20.

[22] *Didascalia* 2.1.

After Constantine's conversion, the issue of clerical education became increasingly important for some Christian authorities. One reason was the perception that the theological debates that emerged in the fourth century (e.g. Donatism and Arianism) were more sophisticated than those of preceding eras. Because Christian emperors often enforced theological positions as a matter of imperial policy, bishops quickly learned that one faction could be rewarded and another punished according to the ability of each to sway the emperor to its side. Also fueling the interest in higher educational standards was a shift in the demographics of the religion. It was during the fourth century that a sizeable percentage of the *curiales* (the land-owning provincial aristocracy) first entered the Church and assumed roles among the clergy.[23] These men had the benefits of education and wealth. Not only did they employ these gifts for the benefit of the Church, many came to perceive them as indispensable prerequisites for pastoral leadership.

Men like St Gregory the Theologian (AD 330–390) and St Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) believed that an educated clergy could not only articulate a response to the challenge of heresy, but could also minister more effectively to their congregations. In fact, St Augustine identified rhetorical expertise as the single most important skill possessed by a Christian leader because the priest communicated doctrinal information through public speaking.[24] For him, the surest way to guarantee that the faithful would receive adequate teaching was to ordain men already trained in rhetoric.

Though a candidate was typically not barred because of his humble origins, bishops in the post-Constantinian period were increas-

[23] See Claudia Rapp, "The Elite Status of Bishops in Late Antiquity in Ecclesiastical, Spiritual and Social Contexts" *Arethusa* 33 (2000): 379–99.
[24] Augustine *On Christian Teaching* 4.2.3ff. For an English translation, see R.P.H. Green, trans., *St Augustine of Hippo: On Christian Teaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

ingly drawn from the nobility, particularly the *curiales*.[25] In part, this was the natural consequence of Constantine's conversion—he enabled other members of the Roman elite to join the religion. It could also be a result of Constantine's establishment of the episcopal court system, which provided an alternative legal venue for Christians who feared persecution from pagan judges.[26] Since every bishop was required to preside over legal cases, it became necessary to consider judicial competence as a prerequisite for episcopal election. By employing the judicial talents of the *curiales*, the Church utilized the resources of the Roman administrative system.[27] However, the extent to which the *curialis*-turned-priest was required to abandon the privileges of his noble life was a matter of debate and varied widely.

There is ample evidence of Christians trying to enforce a more rigorous asceticism than that which was practiced by most *curiales*—even more rigorous than what was prescribed by 1 Timothy. This was true of both the pre- and post-Constantinian period. The third-century *Didascalia*, for example, requires that the bishop "be scant and poor in his food and drink, that he may be able to be watchful in admonishing and correcting those who are undisciplined. And let him not be crafty and extravagant, nor luxurious, nor pleasure-loving, nor fond of dainty meats."[28]

Part of the anxiety about moral and ascetic purity stemmed from

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[25]See Claudia Rapp, "The Elite Status of Bishops," esp. 386–87. See also, her *Holy Bishops*, 183–88. See also A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 284–602, 3 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 93.

[26]On the episcopal court system, see Jill Harries, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 199–211.

[27]In the Roman system, men of curial rank were required to serve as judges in local civil disputes. The *curiales* who became bishops, therefore, were well prepared for the demands of the episcopal court system.

[28]*Didascalia* 2.5.

the perceived connection between the cleric's holiness and his ability to bind and loose sin. It took time for Orthodox Christians to arrive at the conclusion that the sins of the priest did not negate the effectiveness of his sacraments. In the third century, there was considerable uneasiness regarding the link between a bishop's sanctity and his power to cleanse sin in others. The *Didascalia* states that a bishop who fails to live up to the standards of the episcopate jeopardizes the entire community.[29] And in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, the famous Alexandrian teacher Origen (d. c. 254) cast doubt on the ability of a sinful cleric to offer effective spiritual leadership.[30] In short, Origen offered a tacit acknowledgement of the authority of the bishop in the Church, but he cautioned that the dignity of the episcopate neither guaranteed virtuous living, spiritual knowledge, nor an effective pastoral ministry.

By the fourth century, the monastic communities of Egypt and elsewhere understood ascetic experience (and not ordination) to be the most important criterion for leadership. For example, St Ammonas (a disciple of the monastic father St Anthony the Great) insisted that authority derived from ascetic progress made in isolation.[31]

This is why the holy fathers also withdrew into the desert alone, men such as Elijah and John the Baptist. For do not suppose that because the righteous were in the midst of men it was

[29] *Didascalia* 2.18.

[30] Commenting on Peter's ability to bind and loose, Origen interprets that prerogative as belonging to anyone who is a "Peter" in the eyes of God (i.e. whoever meets the standard of Peter's faith and life). Origen *Commentary on Matthew* 12.11.

[31] Ammonas *Ep* 4, 12. I have relied on Chitty's and Brock's translation from the Syriac. Derwis Chitty and Sebastian Brock, trans., *The Letters of Ammonas, Successor of Saint Anthony* (Oxford: SLG Press, 1979).

among men that they achieved their righteousness. Rather having first practiced much quiet, they then received the power of God dwelling in them, and then God sent them into the midst of men, having acquired every virtue, so that they might act as God's provisioners and cure men of their infirmities. For they were physicians of the soul, able to cure men's infirmities.[32]

Writing to his disciples, St Ammonas hoped that they too could come to know the mysteries of God. This knowledge, however, came "only to those who had purified their hearts from every defilement and from all the vanities of the world and to those who had taken up their crosses and fortified themselves and been obedient to God in everything."[33] Consequently, it was only a few select leaders that possessed an intimate knowledge of the divine and who were therefore able to instruct others.[34]

St Ammonas differentiated between those who possessed spiritual authority and those who did not. What distinguished St Ammonas and ascetics like him from those Christians living in the world was that, for him, ordination had no part in the formula of authority. In fact, he never mentioned the clergy or ordination in his correspondence with his disciples.[35]

While ascetic experience was the most important criterion for St Ammonas, like most ascetics, he did not believe that it was the lone basis for spiritual leadership. Only those who had also displayed obedience and maintained a powerful prayer life were suited to lead others. He reminded his readers that he had been a disciple of St

[32]Ammonas *Ep* 12.
[33]Ammonas *Ep* 6.
[34]Ibid.

[35]To be certain, St Ammonas was concerned with spiritual, and not institutional, authority. Many of the monks of the Egyptian desert were skeptical of the spiritual insights of institutional leaders (i.e. the clergy).

Anthony. St Ammonas' own rise to the rank of spiritual father was directly related to his subordination to such a holy master.[36]

Discernment (διάκρισις) was another marker of spiritual authority in the ascetic community. In many of his own letters, St Anthony noted that he prayed that his disciples might receive the gift of discernment in order to understand better the difference between good and evil and thereby offer themselves more completely to God.[37] He also related that he knew of men who had pursued asceticism for many years, but in the end, the lack of discernment led to their spiritual demise.[38] How did one attain discernment? For both St Anthony and St Ammonas, discernment came as a result of ascetic progress, trial, and prayer.[39] To these prerequisites, St Ammonas added isolation. "If you want to come to this . . . withdraw yourselves from others or else they will not allow you to progress."[40]

## THE SPIRITUAL FATHER AND PASTORAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ASCETIC COMMUNITY

Within most ascetic communities of the late ancient period, a dynamic relationship existed between a spiritual father and his disciples.[41] A monk's advisor was not always the abbot of his commu-

[36] Ammonas Ep 11.

[37] See, for example, Anthony Ep 6. I have relied on Rubenson's translation of Anthony's Letters: Samuel Rubenson, The Letters of St Anthony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

[38] Anthony Ep 6.

[39] Ammonas Ep 4.

[40] Ibid.

[41] See Iréné Hausherr's Spiritual Direction in the Early Christian East, A. Gythiel, trans. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990). See also Philip Rousseau, Ascetics Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and John Cassian (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 19–32 and 49–55.

nity, and in the fourth century he was rarely ordained.[42] Both St Basil of Caesarea (AD 329–379) and the Egyptian monk St Pachomius (d. 348) were two important organizers of monastic communities. They envisioned societies of lay monks that were too large for a single abbot to serve as the only spiritual counselor, so they divided the responsibility of supervision among several experienced elders who worked under the watchful eye of the abbot.[43] Ideally, advisor and advisee communicated regularly; the novice confessed his sins to his mentor, while the mentor encouraged, taught, and reprimanded the novice as necessary.[44]

Naturally, much of the spiritual father's instruction was concerned with the discipline of asceticism. In some cases, this pastoral advice was recorded by the disciples for posterity. Eventually, these texts began to circulate among monastic communities because it was believed that the wisdom of these saintly fathers would be beneficial to other ascetics. It is important to note that the novice monks in these stories rarely asked theological questions, and they never sought a discourse with their elders. Rather, they wanted simple axiomatic teachings that they could apply to their life and their *askesis*.[45]

For many ascetic authors, an important component of the elder-

[42]See Hausherr, *Spiritual Direction*, 99–122, and Rousseau, *Ascetics*, 56–67.

[43]Cf. Basil *Longer Rules* 54; see also Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 104–118. For an English translation of St Basil's work, see Monica Wagner, trans., *St Basil: Ascetic Works*, Fathers of the Church Series (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1950).

[44]Ibid. See also Claudia Rapp, " 'For Next to God, you are my Salvation': Reflections on the Rise of the Holy man in Late Antiquity," in J. Howard-Johnston and P. Hayward, eds., *The Cult of the Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999), 63–81.

[45]See Benedicta Ward, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1975), xxii.

disciple relationship was the absolute authority of the spiritual advisor. For example, St Basil insisted that a monk abandon his own will and succumb to his superior. He wrote: "The novice does not make the choice of what is good or useful, since he has irrevocably relinquished the disposal of himself to others."[46] Identifying the spiritual father as the oracle of God's will in the life of the disciple, St Ammonas commented: "Unless a man denies himself and his own will, and obeys his spiritual parents, he will not be able to recognize God's will."[47] In short, subordinates were not to question the instruction of their superiors, nor were they to act of their own accord. By the beginning of the seventh century, the virtue of obedience greatly dominated ascetic literature such that St John Climacus claimed that a truly obedient monk would find salvation even if his spiritual father led him into heresy.[48]

With the authority of leadership came duty and accountability. St Anthony frequently acknowledged his responsibility to pray for his disciples and to extend spiritual love to them.[49] St Ammonas, likewise, noted that a spiritual father was expected to pray continuously for those in his care.[50] For his part, St Basil warned that any spiritual father who failed to correct the vice of his disciples would pay for their sins at his own judgment (a point that was repeated by many of the fathers in subsequent generations).[51] With this in mind, many authors warned of the dangers associated with spiritual direction. St Gregory the Theologian famously quipped that

[46] Basil *Longer Rules* 41.
[47] Ammonas *Ep* 11.
[48] John Climacus *Ladder of Divine Ascent* 4. For an English translation, see Norman Russell, trans., *John Climacus: The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Classics of Western Spirituality Series (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982).
[49] Cf. Anthony *Ep* 3, 4, 5, and 6.
[50] Cf. Ammonas *Ep* 4, 5, 8, and 12.
[51] Basil *Longer Rules* 25.

spiritual direction was so difficult that it was the "art of arts and science of sciences."[52]

As noted, one of the things that separated an elder from ordinary monks was the possession of discernment. It was often believed to be the key supernatural gift that enabled effective guidance. Discernment empowered the elder to recognize demons, angels, and to understand the spiritual needs of his disciples. For his part, St Gregory the Great (bishop of Rome from AD 590–604) commented that St Benedict could discern whenever one of his monks tried to deceive him. As a result, the saint was better prepared to offer the necessary spiritual medicine.

Other pastoral techniques of the ascetic community included "economy" (οἰκονομία), the internalization of the spiritual battle, and the use of the saintly exemplar.[53] Οἰκονομία refers to a spiritual father's temporary relaxation of a prescribed reprimand. By the fourth century, the Church had established fixed punishments for many specific sins, but the spiritual counselor had the authority to increase or lessen the weight of the penalty, depending on the attitude of the sinner and his ability to withstand it. The goal was to avoid a punishment that did more harm than good. To be sure, the New Testament provided a basis for οἰκονομία, and it was almost certainly employed by some of the clergy, but it was in the monastic environment that its pastoral application developed most completely. For example, St Basil established a systematic method of discipline for his monastic community in Cappadocia. There, an initial infraction generated a reproach; a pattern of misbehavior led to excommunication.[54] The spiritual father, however, was encour-

[52]Gregory Nazianzen *Oration* 2.16. For an English translation, see the Nicene, Post-Nicene Fathers Series, which is available on-line.
[53]For a thorough analysis of St John Cassian's use of techniques, see *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church*, 114–24.
[54]Basil *Longer Rules* 27.

aged to season his correction of subordinates with discernment. The pastoral goal of disciplinary action was to return the sinner to proper conduct. If necessary, the elder was to amend the rules, and he was expected to determine the spiritual challenges faced by his disciples so as to identify the most constructive path to recovery.

There is little denying an internalization in ascetic spirituality. The legislative enjoinders that were contained in the Old Testament (e.g. do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery) presented a moral imperative. But, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compelled his followers to investigate whether they harbored internal sins. For example, he asked if anyone carried lust in his heart (Mt 5.27–28). Building upon this type of personal inspection, ascetics of the fourth century carried this process of self-reflection much further, with the result that they began to identify sin where previous Christians had not noticed it. For example, they scruti- nized the vices (i.e. inner depravations that led to spiritual or phys- ical sin) and created a catalogue of spiritual antidotes for their prevention, whereby fasting prevented gluttony, charity assuaged greed, and humility protected against pride. There is evidence of these concerns as early as the letters of St Anthony and St Ammonas, but it was Evagrius of Pontus' (AD 345–99) identifica- tion of eight λογοσμοί (which, in the West, became known as the "seven deadly sins") that best characterize the ascetic's intensive analysis of personal vice and virtue.

A final example of the methods of spiritual direction in the asce- tic community is that of the saintly exemplar. The circulation of ascetic sayings and saints' lives in late antiquity provided a para- digm of instruction that was easily communicated to a multitude of audiences. After a monk confessed his sins or doubts to his men- tor, the elder was able to offer encouragement and/or instruction through the exemplar. By exhorting a disciple to either a holy say-

ing or pious act, the spiritual counselor could solve any crisis. If a monk suffered from despair, then there was an account to rebuild his confidence. If he suffered from gluttony, then there were dozens of anecdotes to scare him into temperance. These exemplars provided practical spiritual advice that reinforced the ascetic imperative—the wide circulation of the lives and sayings of the saints was due, in part, to their pastoral usefulness.[55]

## PASTORAL ACTIVITIES OF THE CLERGY

Generally speaking, the "parish" clergy of the early fourth century busied themselves with a different type of pastoral ministry that was dominated by the sacramental, doctrinal, and administrative responsibilities of their office. By this time, the sacramental roles of the clergy had been firmly established. As St John Chrysostom noted near the close of the century, the priest could literally confer salvation through baptism and the Eucharist—a quality (according to St John) that placed the priest in a position superior to the angels.[56]

Also by this time, confession and penance had begun to emerge as an important "sacramental" function of the clergy.[57] Even before Constantine, the *Didascalia* provided some detail about the bishop's role in investigating, disciplining, and counseling the sinners of his

[55]The most famous collection of "sayings" in late antiquity was a text known as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. For an English translation, see Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

[56]John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood* 3.4–5.

[57]To say that confession or penance were understood as "sacraments" during the fourth century would be to overstate the case. The earliest analysis of the "mysteries" was that of Pseudo-Dionysius, which likely dates to the sixth century.

community.[58] However, the text also acknowledged that the bishop was unlikely to be able to provide personalized guidance (it was simply impossible for him to know everyone well). While some clerics may have cultivated a close pastoral relationship with members of their flock (thus mirroring the more intensive pattern of the ascetic community), there is little evidence from our sources for such a development. It is not until the second half of the fourth century (when men like St Gregory the Theologian, St Basil the Great, and St John Chrysostom rose to the episcopate) that we find an endorsement of the ascetic notions of spiritual fatherhood penetrating the lay church. In short, it was not until monks entered the episcopate that the members of the clergy employed the pastoral traditions of the ascetic community.

For many advocates of the cleric-oriented approach to spiritual direction, doctrinal instruction was the most important of the cleric's many pastoral responsibilities. The great influx of converts during the fourth century prompted the call for an articulate, well-educated clergy that could disseminate the teachings of the faith to a large and diverse audience. The priest was expected to convey the doctrinal truths of Orthodox teaching to the faithful through catechism, the public homily, and private correspondence. It was not enough for the cleric to understand the tradition—he had to be able to communicate it effectively. Interestingly, every hierarch who commented on the subject during the fourth and fifth centuries bemoaned the shortage of skilled preachers.

An essential component of instruction involved the proper understanding of the Scriptures. Many bishops from the fourth century onward devoted an immense amount of time to public exegesis. St John Chrysostom provides an excellent example of this. Over five hundred of his sermons on various books of the Old and

[58] *Didascalia* 2.12–18.

New Testaments survive. St John was not alone: St Athanasius, St Augustine, and St Gregory the Great all understood the public interpretation of Scripture (i.e. preaching) to be the cornerstone of a bishop's pastoral ministry. Through preaching, they hoped not only to promote an Orthodox understanding of the Scriptures but also to shape Christian behavior.

It was the administrative responsibilities that seem to have caused the most headaches for the early clergy. Our sources describe with embittered detail the time and resources that clerics spent caring for the poor and sick, supervising widows and virgins, and building churches and hospitals.[59] By the close of the fourth century, these rather obvious pastoral tasks expanded to include many civic responsibilities that were previously performed by the Roman *curiales* and other administrative officials.[60] The creation of the episcopal court was seen by many bishops to be an enormous hassle.[61] Moreover, in those regions that suffered from barbarian invasions, the ransoming of captives and care of prisoners became important clerical roles. By the close of the sixth century, the papacy had become so ingrained in the civic administration of Italy that St Gregory the Great found himself arranging for lumber shipments, rebuilding the city's defenses, and negotiating peace treaties with barbarian tribes.

Even the more traditional of the bishop's administrative concerns were likely to absorb a great amount of his attention and bring him little satisfaction for his efforts. In urban environments, pro-

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[59]See Henry Chadwick, *The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society* (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenism and Modern Studies, 1979), 1–14.

[60]On transferal of civic responsibilities, see Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 279–89.

[61]Possidius suggests as much in his account of Augustine. Possidius *Life of Augustine* 19. For an English translation, see Roy Deferrari, trans., *Early Christian Biographies*, Fathers of the Church Series (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1952).

viding for the poor put the bishop into the businesses of fund-raising, property management, and administration. The same was true of the care of widows, which involved both financial support and spiritual outreach.[62]

Among the many transformations of the Christian community during the fourth century, one of the most significant was the rise of professed ascetics to positions of episcopal power. This began in the second half of the fourth century, and it continued to gain momentum in the fifth and sixth centuries. Like the conversion of St Constantine, the election of monks to the episcopate caused something of a pastoral dilemma. Would these men bring the ascetic patterns of spiritual direction to the parish, or would they conform to the standards of pastoral care already operating in the lay environment? For several generations, the transition was inconsistent, and many Christian authorities presented competing ideas about spiritual direction.[63] It was precisely during that period of uncertainty that some of the most influential saints in the Orthodox tradition developed a new genre of Christian literature—the pastoral treatise—to navigate the choppy waters of post-Constantinian spiritual direction.

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[62]In describing the difficulty of caring for widows, St Chrysostom lamented: "Widows, as a class, owing partly to their poverty, partly to their age, and partly to their gender, use an unbridled freedom of speech—to call it no worse! The man who cares for them must bear it all politely and not be provoked by their inopportune fussing or their unreasonable complaints." John Chrysostom On the Priesthood 3.16.

[63]See Demacopoulos, Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church.

## THE PASTORAL TREATISE AND THE MERGER OF THE TWO TRADITIONS

The second half of the fourth century witnessed a new development in Christian writing—the pastoral treatise. St Gregory the Theologian, St Ambrose of Milan, and St John Chrysostom separately authored substantial treatments of the subject. Their texts defined who should and who should not receive ordination, identified the priest's practical responsibilities, and anticipated many of the priest's pastoral challenges. Each of these men fit the new model of the ascetic-bishop, and each struggled to resolve the tension between ascetic idealism and the realities of pastoral ministry.[64] Their own writings on pastoral care emerged, in part, to resolve that tension.

Distinct from any that preceded it, this genre provided its authors with the opportunity to explore in detail both the criteria for authority and the techniques of spiritual leadership. Unlike the *Didascalia* and similar texts, which had described certain requirements for leadership and discipline, the pastoral treatise enabled an author to offer nuanced ideas about spiritual authority and direction. In his *On the Priesthood*, for example, St John Chrysostom could identify ascetic experience as a prerequisite for leadership, but he could also assert that a successful ministry was not guaranteed by a monastic training alone.[65] Likewise, St Gregory the Theologian could express his deepest uncertainties about his ability to balance care for his flock with his own private meditation.

[64] Although St Ambrose went directly from a civic position to the episcopate, he became a dedicated ascetic and encouraged asceticism among his flock. See Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 53–67.
[65] John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood* 3.15.

We find the earliest attempts to combine ascetic and clerical responsibilities in these fourth-century treatises. St Ambrose, for example, understood the priest's duties to include doctrinal instruction, the celebration of the sacraments, the support of the poor and widows, and the supervision of virgins. He also identified the need to mentor inexperienced clerics. Referring to the ideal relationship of Joshua and Moses, St Ambrose examined the bond that a teacher and disciple share, and he affirmed that spiritual authority could be transferred from the one to the other.[66] Though not fully developed, St Ambrose's description of the experienced advisor is similar to the spiritual father-spiritual disciple pattern of direction that was developing in the ascetic community.

The bridge between the ascetic and clerical patterns of direction is even more explicit in St Gregory the Theologian's second oration, known today as *On his Flight to Pontus*. Therein, he concluded that the ideal candidate for the priesthood was a man who had the benefits of wealth and education (in antiquity, only the wealthy received educations), but who had abandoned the pleasures of the aristocratic life and adopted the life of abstemiousness and contemplation (i.e. the life of the monk). Gregory went on to describe the priest's responsibilities as a combination of the active life of pastoral administration and the prayerful life of the remote ascetic. It was St Gregory who first proposed a combination between action and contemplation, and this grouping became the model for priestly service in the Byzantine era.

Eventually, the increasing number of monks who entered the episcopate forced a sea change in the practice of spiritual direction in the lay church because, with time, pastoral care in the broader church became more ascetic. Many of the tenets of the clerical

[66] Ambrose *On the Office* 1.43, 2.20. For an English translation, see the Nicene, Post-Nicene Fathers Series.

model persisted (e.g. the authority of the clergy, the emphasis on preaching, and a concern for administrative competence), but even those considerations evolved to reflect ascetic ideals. For example, St Gregory the Great (the author of the most comprehensive treatise on pastoral care) understood authority to belong to the clergy, but identified ascetic experience as the most important criterion for ordination.

## CONCLUSION

To summarize, pastoral care took many forms in early Christianity. The criteria by which Christian authorities selected their successors and the pastoral techniques that they passed on to those men varied widely, especially in the immediate period after Constantine's conversion. As episcopal vacancies became increasingly filled by ascetics, so too did ascetic notions of spiritual direction gain traction in the lay church. This evolution, however, was not smooth, and many saintly men offered competing ideas about the extent to which ascetic ideas about spiritual direction should be absorbed by the entire Church.[67] With time, however, Christians in both the East and West came to embrace a synthesis of the clerical and ascetic models in which authority resided with the clergy, but ascetic experience became one of the principal criteria for the selection of new bishops (this is why Byzantine canonists argued that bishops were to be drawn from the monastic clergy). Moreover, many of the pastoral techniques that had originated in the ascetic community became entrenched in medieval religiosity.

The tension between monastery and parish or, more specifically,

[67]St Augustine of Hippo, for example, rejected the idea that ascetic experience provided a basis for pastoral authority.

between the ascetic and clerical models of spiritual direction has continued, to some extent, down to the present day. But this tension remains beneficial. In the Byzantine period, for example, the Church certainly benefited from saintly (albeit renegade) monks like St Symeon the New Theologian (AD 949–1022) who openly critiqued a morally suspect and complacent episcopacy. And it is in the tradition of the monk-bishop that the Church has found its greatest leaders—men like St Basil of Caesarea, St Gregory the Theologian, and St John Chrysostom, who equally valued administrative competence and ascetic experience when they identified the qualities of episcopal candidacy and grounded doctrinal authority within the episcopate.

Today, the Church in United States faces a new set of pastoral challenges related to pluralism and secularism that have, to date, produced few consistent answers. Perhaps it should not surprise us that the variety of opinions on these questions seems to mirror the ancient dichotomy between monastery and parish: that is to say, many of the priests who emphasize the traditionally ascetic strategies for pastoral care (e.g. strict fasting, frequent confession, and the reading of saints' lives) are the most likely to be resistant to their secular environment. There is, in fact, a striking similarity between the challenges of the fourth century and the tensions of today.[68] Just as ancient Christians divided between those who would integrate with Roman society and those who would not, so too many Christians of today (both lay and clerical) struggle to find an acceptable level of acculturation in Western society. Some maintain that the adoption of Western ideas and ideals is not only acceptable but also necessary; while others resist assimilation and strive to create an

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[68]To be sure, the specific questions are different (in the fourth century Christians wondered if it was acceptable to serve in the Roman government or to read pagan literature). But the answers are quite similar.

enclave of Orthodox culture in spite of their pluralistic and secular surroundings.

Clerical dress provides an interesting, if ancillary, case in point. Some priests always wear a cassock in public, while others don a western collar, and still others prefer "street clothes." More meaningfully, the measure of acculturation often manifests itself through very different pastoral perspectives concerning things like the appropriate levels of fasting and charity, the willingness to participate in secular holidays such as Halloween, and whether a convert from another Christian tradition should be baptized or chrismated. These issues point to the persistent tension between Orthodox Christians and their non-Orthodox environment and, it should be realized, they have the potential to push many from the middle to one pole or the other (i.e., to sectarianism or assimilation). The consequence of such a division is that the Church in the United States could retreat to a situation similar to the post-Constantinian gulf between monastery and parish. To do so, however, would risk the delicate synthesis of the pastoral traditions, established by some of the most important leaders in our Church's history.

For the Church in the United States to find a productive solution to the questions of pluralism and secularism, both its leaders and members must understand that a diversity of pastoral strategies in this regard is not only in keeping with the Orthodox tradition, but also is a healthy part of that tradition. Just as the Church Fathers developed the pastoral treatise as a mechanism to balance the ascetic and clerical models of pastoral care, so too must we look for a solution to our present challenges in a way that bridges both ends of the spectrum (i.e. those who are reluctant to embrace Western society and those who already have). In the end, we will need to find a way to engage, critique, and transform Western society, just

as the monk-bishops of the early Church engaged, critiqued, and transformed the Roman world.

# ORTHODOX THEOLOGIES OF WOMEN AND ORDAINED MINISTRY

## Valerie A. Karras

In 1978 I considered the ordination of women priests to be an impossibility. Now I am much more hesitant. . . . What I would plead is that we Orthodox should regard the matter as essentially an open question. Let us not imagine that in this area everything is clarified and finally settled; for manifestly it is not, either for us Orthodox or for other Christians.—*Kallistos Ware, Bishop of Diokleia*[1]

The question of the ordination of women to the priesthood . . . must become for us [Orthodox] a question that is asked "from the inside." This question requires of us all an interior freedom and a deep communion with the vision and will of God, in a prayerful silence.—*Anthony Bloom, Metropolitan of Sourozh*[2]

[1] Kallistos Ware, "Man, Woman and the Priesthood of Christ," in *Women and the Priesthood*, new ed., Thomas Hopko, ed. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 5–53, at 7.

[2] Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, "Preface to the French Edition," in Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, *The Ministry of Women in the Church*, Steven Bigham, trans. (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1991), xiii–xiv, at xiv.

An Orthodox woman who is competent to do so can occupy a New Testament teaching post in a prestigious theological faculty such as that of Thessalonica. She is, however, not permitted to read the Gospel in the worship of the people of God. An Orthodox theological conference declares unanimously that "any act denying dignity to the human person, any discrimination between men and women based on sex is a sin". But, following a custom that has progressively been established in the Orthodox Church, women remain barred from the altar.—*Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, French Orthodox theologian*[3]

H ow do women participate in liturgical worship in an Orthodox church? That is, what do women actually do in an Orthodox service, and what do they *not* do simply because they are women? Women constitute half (at least) of the Orthodox faithful, yet women are proportionately far less numerous in liturgical, pastoral, and administrative leadership roles than they are in the "pews" (assuming that an Orthodox parish has pews).[4] While women typically make up more than half of the con-

[3]Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "Women in the Orthodox Church," in Elisabeth Behr Sigel and Kallistos Ware, *The Ordination of Women in the Orthodox Church* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 1–10, at 8. The embedded quote is from "Conclusions of the Consultation: Report," in *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church*, ed. Gennadios Limouris (Katerina, Greece: Tertios Publications, 1992), 21–34, at 28.

[4]See Leonie B. Liveris, *Ancient Taboos and Gender Prejudice: Challenges for Orthodox Women and the Church* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), especially chapter 2, "Women, Ecumenism and the Bounds in which They May Work," 27–52. Liveris notes the impact of social and cultural factors on Orthodox women's participation, e.g., more restricted participation in predominantly Muslim countries or increased—if non-ordained—executive authority in countries and churches affected by Communist repression and control of Orthodoxy.

gregation at Sunday liturgy and in four-part parish choirs, it is still relatively uncommon to see women chanters, and there are typically far more men than women parish council members serving "door-keeping" functions (ushering, passing the collection tray, and so forth).

Moreover, outside of women's monasteries, women and girls are almost entirely absent as acolytes. In the United States, at least three priests, one in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and two others in the Orthodox Church in America, were prohibited in the past several years by their diocesan bishop and their Synod of Bishops, respectively, from continuing to include girls among their parish's acolytes. The hierarchs' rationales ranged from fear of negative reactions from traditionalist elements within the church, in the former instance, to an argument, in the latter, that female acolytes were contrary to tradition because only men have served within the altar (which is historically untrue).[5]

[5]The Orthodox Church in America appears ambivalent regarding who is responsible for the decision to prohibit female acolytes. The letter to the parishes of the OCA is signed by the former Chancellor, Protopresbyter Robert S. Kondratick, according to the hypertext link to the letter on the OCA's website <http://www.oca.org/Docs.asp?ID=104&SID=12>, October 10, 2004. However, the letter itself states that this is the decision of the OCA's Synod of Bishops, which met over a week *after* the given date of the letter. Moreover, the bishops' names are not signed to the letter, as would be usual for a formal encyclical or statement. The central portion of the letter reads as follows: "In their concern for maintaining the integrity of the Church and its traditions, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, meeting at Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, October 18–21, 2004, reaffirms the ancient practice of the Orthodox Church that only males are to be admitted to service within the holy altar. Any practice to the contrary in this regard is strictly forbidden."

With respect to the contention that "only males are to be admitted to service within the holy altar," this is patently untrue, whether one considers the ordination of female deacons at the altar in the Byzantine Church (see n. 45,

Most significantly, of course, no women in the Eastern Ortho-dox churches today are ordained to the "major orders" of deacon, presbyter (priest), or bishop.[6] Historically, women have never been

below), the regular acolyte activities of nuns in monastic churches, or the infor-mal functions of older women maintaining the sanctuary in Greek parish churches or assisting in the vesting of clergy in the altar areas of the great cathe-drals of Russia. Is Fr Kondratick's actual contention, then, that women may only serve in the altar at non-monastic churches in traditionally female tasks, e.g., cleaning and vesting?

[6]This may change in the future due to the October 8, 2004 decision of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece to reinstitute the female diaconate, although the synod decided to limit it initially to a few remote women's monasteries. Nev-ertheless, some bishops seek the revival of a full, ordained pastoral ministry for women. Phyllis Zagano, a professor of religious studies at Hofstra University, penned a short article on this synodal decision for the online version of the Catholic magazine *America*. In it, she quoted from the Athens News Agency, not-ing that "Chrysostomos, bishop of Peristeri, said, 'The role of female deacons must be in society and not in the monasteries.' Other members of the Holy Synod agreed and stressed that the role of women deacons should be social—for exam-ple, the care of the sick." Phyllis Zagano, "Grant Her Your Spirit," <www.Ameri-camagazine.org>, February 7, 2005; reproduced on the Orthodox News website sponsored by the Orthodox Christian News Service, <www.orthodoxnews.net-firms.com/158/Your.htm>, vol. 7, no. 6, February 8, 2005.

In the early twentieth century, St Nektarios of Aegina ordained to the dia-conate two nuns in the women's monastery he founded on the island. When questioned about this by Archbishop Theoklitos of Athens, the saint replied that they were really akin to subdeacons; however, they chanted petitions and read the Gospel during services, which are liturgical functions of the deacon but not of the subdeacon. See Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 151–52.

Among the Oriental Orthodox churches, the Coptic Church in Egypt has consecrated (non-ordained) deaconesses, whose ministry includes religious education and pastoral service. In the Armenian Apostolic Church from the mid-nineteenth century until about two decades ago, some nuns were fully ordained as female deacons, exercising the same liturgical functions and being vested identically (except for the addition of a veil) to their male counterparts.

ordained to the priesthood or episcopacy (contemporary arguments to the contrary notwithstanding[7]). Even in early Christianity and in the Byzantine Church, where women were fully ordained and ranked as deacons,[8] their liturgical functions occurred primarily in the private, female spheres of parish life (e.g., taking the Eucharist to sick women in their homes). With the exception of (1) their ordination and reception of the Eucharist at the altar (2) their assistance in the physical rites of baptism of adult women converts, and (3) their chanting at matins (and perhaps other services) in the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, we have no extant evidence of female deacons' participation in public worship beyond their ministry in women's monastic churches and within the women's section of parish churches and cathedrals.[9]

[7]A few scholars—most notably Giorgio Otranto, Mary Ann Rossi, and Karen Jo Torjesen—have interpreted epigrammatic titles such as *presbytera* or *episcopa*, a badly damaged Roman catacomb fresco, and an ambiguous papal letter as evidence that women were ordained to the offices of presbyter and bishop, but their theories have not been widely accepted within the scholarly community. Giorgio Otranto, "Note sul sacerdozio femminile nell'antichità in margine a una testimonianza di Gelasio I" *Vetera Christianorum* 19 (1982): 341–60; Giorgio Otranto, *Italia meridionale e Puglia paleocristiane: saggi storici* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1991); Mary Ann Rossi, "Priesthood, Precedent, and Prejudice: On Recovering the Women Priests of Early Christianity" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 73–93; and Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993). For a critique of these arguments, see Valerie A. Karras, "Priestesses or Priests' Wives: *Presbytera* in Early Christianity" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 51.2–3 (2007): 321–45.

[8]See the discussion of the nature of the historical female diaconate in a later section of this article.

[9]For a full examination of the evidence regarding the historical ordination and functions of female deacons, see Valerie A. Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church" *Church History* 73.2 (June 2004): 272–316.

There is nothing surprising about this. The Church's historical division of public and private diaconal ministries by sex paralleled the gendered division of functions in almost all aspects of life in the late antique and Byzantine societies in which Orthodox Christianity developed. However, in contemporary Western societies, women's roles are virtually equivalent to those of men, yet the attitudes of most Orthodox toward men and women in ordained ministries remains strongly differentiated by sex. Why do most Orthodox believe that, while men's liturgical participation *as men* is not to be restricted in any way, women may participate liturgically only in some ways but not in others—and, in particular, not as ordained priests?[10]

[10]There are no thorough, major studies of the views of Orthodox on these issues, but a widespread perception exists among clergy, hierarchs, and scholars that most Orthodox are comfortable with the exclusion of women from the priesthood and, for many, even from the diaconate. In addition to Liveris, *Ancient Taboos*, see, e.g., Ellen Gvosdev, *The Female Diaconate: An Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Co., 1991), who reports (at 40–46) the results of her small survey of attitudes toward a restored female diaconate. While Gvosdev found widespread support for the female diaconate ("active" support among a majority of the women respondents, but mostly "passive" support among the men surveyed, i.e., the latter were not opposed to female deacons but would not encourage their wives or daughters to be ordained), such support did not extend to the idea of a female priesthood. As one woman opined (42–43), "I think it is great if women are allowed to serve as deacons, but I don't want to see women demanding to be priests, and making a feminist issue out of ordination." See also the discussion of Gvosdev's survey in Pauline Kollontai, "Contemporary Thinking on the Role and Ministry of Women in the Orthodox Church" *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 15.2 (2000): 165–79, at 171. In terms of attitudes among clergy, the results of a 2006 survey conducted by sociologist Alexei D. Krindatch for the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute are revealing: only seven percent of OCA and GOA clergy in western and midwestern dioceses of the United States, asked to choose which among 19 issues were "very important to be openly discussed"—

These are questions that many of us as Orthodox rarely reflect on, and, when we do, most of us tend to give the same answer as Tevye from "Fiddler on the Roof": *Tradition!* However, there are many traditions in the Church, and not all of them are theologically based and immutable in nature. In fact, some more recent "traditions" of the past few decades or even centuries conflict with older practices and sometimes with canonical or nomocanonical legislation.[11] Thus, it has become common for Orthodox theologians to distinguish between "traditions" (liturgical and other practices which may be rooted in the needs, experiences, or culture of an Orthodox people in a given time and place) and "Tradition" as the manifestation of the underlying theology and spirituality of the Church throughout time and irrespective of place.[12]

and given the opportunity to select multiple answers—chose "ordination of women" as one of those issues.

At the "official" level, the restriction of the priesthood (and episcopacy) to men has been unambiguously treated as though dogma in virtually every ecumenical or bilateral dialogue involving Orthodox participants, as well as in the proceedings of inter-Orthodox conferences on women in the church, such as one sponsored by the World Council of Churches and held in Rhodes, Greece, in 1986 (see *The Place of the Woman*, ed. Limouris). In an unpublished but widely-disseminated letter sent, prior to the conference, to the late, noted French Orthodox theologian Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, the late Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh (equally well-known spiritual writer and head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain) criticized the conference's pre-ordained conclusions as indicated by its original title: "The Impossibility of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood." Only one bilateral dialogue, a non-hierarchical European meeting between Orthodox and Old Catholics, has challenged this hegemonic position and its theological presuppositions.

[11]Most of these newer traditions are late or even post-Byzantine, e.g., the wearing of crowns by bishops or the wide-sleeved robes and stovepipe hats worn by many priests and deacons. The former was forbidden while a Byzantine emperor still existed, and the latter developed from Ottoman judicial attire, which itself was adapted from French judicial clothing.

[12]As Vladimir Lossky averred, Tradition is "the critical spirit of the Church":

It is important to note that the lack of a theological foundation does not make a tradition worthless or wrong, nor must we automatically discard more recent practices because they conflict either with older traditions or with early church canons. However, it does mean that, when a tradition ceases to serve its situational purpose, the Church may transform—or even discard—that tradition without damaging the theological fabric of the Church. Therefore, an instinctive, non-reflective response of "Tradition!" to justify various limits on women's liturgical participation—from exclusion from the Eucharist during menstruation and after childbirth,[13] to exclusion from the ordained clergy—is insufficient.

"Tradition and traditions," in his *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Pres, 1974), 141–68, at 156. Kallistos Ware, who cautions that "Tradition is not to be equated with cultural stereotypes, with custom or social convention; there is a vital difference between 'traditions' and Holy Tradition" (Ware, "Man, Woman, and the Priesthood," p. 10) advocates a dynamic, critical, and creative appropriation of tradition: "Authentic traditionalism, then, is not a slavish imitation of the past, but a courageous effort to discriminate between the transitory and the essential. The true traditionalist is not the integrist or the reactionary, but the one who discerns the 'signs of the times' (Mt 16:3)—who is prepared to discover the leaven of the Gospel at work even within such a seemingly secular movement as modern feminism" (p. 26).

[13]See, e.g., Charlotte Fonrobert, "The Woman with a Blood-Flow (Mark 5.24–34) Revisited: Menstrual Laws and Jewish Culture in Christian Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 121–40; Patrick Viscuso, "Purity and Sexual Defilement in Late Byzantine Theology" *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 57 (1991): 399–408; and, especially, the chapter titled "Blood and Birth" in Valerie A. Karras, *Women in the Byzantine Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). More generally on the issue of menstrual impurity, see Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), and the edited volume *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, eds. Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie

Of course, not all Orthodox agree that women's liturgical participation should be restricted, and not all Orthodox who believe that women's liturgical participation *should* be restricted in various ways limit their justification to "tradition." In fact, there are a variety of theological reasons given for why limiting women's liturgical roles in the Orthodox Church is or is not correct. In most cases, these arguments are based on a particular *theological anthropology*. Theological anthropology is the theological study of the nature of the human person, especially regarding who the human being is in relationship to God, as opposed to the social scientific study of human cultures or of prehistoric human genetic evolution, which is the conventional view of the field of anthropology.

It is impossible to speak intelligently and coherently about what women may or may not do in their participation in Orthodox worship without examining carefully what we believe the differences between men and women are, and what those differences should mean for us in the life of the body of Christ, that is, of his Church. Virtually everyone can agree that two things are clear from Scripture and the theology of the church fathers,[14] from biology and genetics, and from simple observation: 1) men and women are spiritually equal in the eyes of God and the Church (that is, they are equally graced with free will and thus equally capable of receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit, exercising virtue, and attaining salvation), and 2) men and women are different from each other in physical, biological, and perhaps emotional and other ways deriving from their physical natures. The various ways in which equality and difference—or "otherness" (*alterité*), as Elisabeth Behr-Sigel

Korte (Harrisburg, PA: Continuum, 2003).

[14]The writings of early Christian theologians are extremely important for the Orthodox Church, more so than for most Christian confessions, including even the Roman Catholic Church.

describes the latter[15]—are weighted and balanced against each other, and in particular what exactly sexual difference entails, lead to various types of theological anthropology with respect to sex and gender.

Unfortunately, both proponents and opponents of restricting women's liturgical participation rarely explain their argument's underlying theological anthropology explicitly. Even more rarely do they recognize where their particular anthropological view fits within the broader "timeline" of salvation history—in other words, where it lies in the progress of human history from creation to the *eschaton* (the ultimate end).[16] While most of the Fathers do not artic-ulate their views in the type of clearly organized fashion we use today, most of them do—implicitly, at least—develop their theolog-ical anthropology in the context of a timeline of human develop-ment. This timeline contains several stages:

STAGE 1 God's eternal plan for humanity before creation (ahis-torical ideal humanity);

[15]Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "The Otherness of Men and Women in the Context of a Christian Civilization," in *The Ministry of Women in the Church* (Redondo Beach, CA: Oakwood Publications, 1991), 25–79.
[16]One of the few modern Orthodox theologians who has discussed his the-ology of sex and gender with explicit reference to this timeline is Paul Evdoki-mov, particularly in his *Woman and the Salvation of the World: Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Woman*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1994), especially 27–28. See the discussions of Evdokimov's anthropology in Peter Phan, *Culture and Eschatology: The Icono-graphical Vision of Paul Evdokimov* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 197ff; idem, "Gender Roles in the History of Salvation: Man and Woman in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov" *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990): 53–66; and Christopher P. Klofft, "Gender and the Process of Moral Development in the Thought of Paul Evdoki-mov" *Theological Studies* 66.1 (March 2005): 69–95. at 79.

STAGE 2 God's creation of humanity and its existence in paradise (prelapsarian[17] humanity), which need not be understood literally;[18]

STAGE 3 humanity on earth, after the fall and the expulsion from paradise but before Christ (postlapsarian humanity BC);

STAGE 4 humanity on earth, after Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection (postlapsarian humanity AD); and

STAGE 5 humanity in its resurrected state, after Christ's second coming (eschatological humanity).

It may be easier to understand these stages by using a commonly considered characteristic of human nature, that of immortality. Immortality is present, or not, in human nature in the following ways, according to the five stages listed above: (1) God intends humanity to be immortal (i.e., God's eternal plan for humanity includes the characteristic of immortality); (2) God creates humanity with the *potential* for immortality (a potential that is not yet realized); (3) humanity *loses* the potential for immortality by

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[17]"Prelapsarian" means "before the fall," in other words, before humanity's fall from grace and expulsion from paradise; "postlapsarian" means "after the fall," and "eschatological" means "final" in the sense of resurrectional.

[18]It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the question of whether or not one understands the creation account(s) in Genesis in a literal manner. Certainly, the Greek Fathers were generally unconcerned with a literal approach to understanding the significance of Genesis, and most modern Orthodox theologians do not view evolutionary theory as being incompatible with the belief that God is the ultimate Creator. This means that what is important are the theological concepts of humanity's movement away from God, God's movement toward humanity, and humanity's responsive return back toward God, but one need not believe that the discussion of Adam and Eve in paradise refers to an actual time and place on earth.

breaking communion with God in the fall and the expulsion from paradise, and becomes simply mortal; (4) humanity *regains* the potential for immortality by Jesus Christ's restoration of human nature through his incarnation, death, and resurrection (we still die physically, but are not dead forever); and (5) resurrected humanity is immortal in nature, thus finally achieving God's eternal plan.

Note that Stage 5—humanity in the resurrection or *eschaton*—is the fulfillment of Stage 1, not of Stage 2. God creates us, in other words, with unrealized potential, which we are called to achieve. This is the distinction the Fathers traditionally make between being created in the *image* of God (Gen 1.26–27) and growing into the *likeness* of God (Gen 1.26). They believe the *image* represents the characteristics that all humans bear intrinsically, such as reason and free will, and the likeness represents those into which we may grow through spiritual progress: virtuousness, perfect love, and so forth.[19] So,

[19]The other difference between the two verses in Genesis is that verse 26 does not mention sexual differentiation as part of God's intention for humanity as God's image and likeness; only in verse 27 does it state that God created humanity "male and female." A number of Fathers see this difference as equally significant. St Gregory of Nyssa, e.g., in his treatise *On the Creation of the Human Being* (*De hominis opificio* 17, 4; PG 44:189CD) argues that God did not originally plan for humanity to exist as male and female, but added sexual differentiation to our nature for procreative purposes because of his foreknowledge of the fall. His ideas are echoed by several other important Fathers, such as St Maximus the Confessor (*De ambigua* 41; PG 91:1309AB) and St John of Damascus, who believes he is summing up the earlier patristic tradition in his treatise *On the Orthodox Faith*: "[S]ince God, who knows all things before they come to be, saw by His foreknowledge how they [Adam and Eve] were to fall and be condemned to death, He made provision beforehand *by creating them male and female* and commanding them to increase and multiply" (*De fide orthodoxa* 4, 24; PG 94:1208D; English translation in FC37: 394). Because this is in itself such a complicated topic, this article will touch on this question only in passing.

With respect to the distinction between Stages 1 and 2, Gregory discusses it in an interesting but slightly different way from most of the Fathers, viewing

God's eternal plan—or ideal humanity—is a key stage to human existence even though it does not occur in time and space. It is important to recognize God's eternal plan as distinct from how God initially creates humanity, since *eschatological* humanity—humanity as it will exist in the resurrection—should fulfill this eternal plan of God, but will not necessarily be a return to *prelapsarian* humanity. In other words, our eschatological state will not necessarily be the same as humanity was when God created it initially.

It is apparent that sensitivity to the differences inherent in human nature at different stages of its historical existence (and of its pre-historical design) is extremely important. Too often, theologians, clergy, and laity are not aware of how important these distinctions are. Unconsciously, we may extrapolate a human characteristic from one stage to another without reflecting on how it might operate differently (or not at all) at a different stage of existence. In the case of sexual differentiation, which we normally call sex (or, inaccurately, gender), such unwarranted extrapolations can have serious consequences in terms of theology and liturgical practice.

Therefore, we will examine the question of women's liturgical participation from the framework of how sex and gender operate at various stages of human existence in order to consider, first, where we as Orthodox Christians consciously or unconsciously place ourselves (theological anthropology in practical application), and secondly, where we *should* place ourselves (theological anthropology as normative). While there are five stages in total, for the purposes of

human creation both from a divine perspective—in other words, as a single totality outside the limits of incremental time—and from a created perspective, as it actually happens in time and space. Gregory is one of the few Fathers *not* to use the terms image and likeness to signify the distinction between God's actual creation of humanity and his eternal plan.

our discussion we will focus particularly on Stages 3 through 5 (post-lapsarian—both BC and AD—and eschatological humanity) and on the tensions that arise for us in our present, Stage 4, existence: caught between Stages 3 and 5, that is, between the fall and the universal resurrection.

It is important to note that, although we shall examine some patristic views on human nature and sex/gender and then apply these views to the question of women's liturgical participation, the Orthodox Church has no official doctrine in this area where theological anthropology intersects liturgical theology, which is perhaps why there are so many different points of view on these questions. Nevertheless, liturgical practice—the *lex orandi* (rule of worship)—is, or *should be*, related to the *lex credendi* (rule of faith). This dictum, however, is not always true, particularly where liturgical traditions are based on social, cultural, and other non-theological factors. But, the *assumption* that it is operative with respect to women's liturgical participation has thus led many Orthodox both in writings and at various theological dialogues to assert unequivocally that the Church's *theology* does not support the ordination of women to the priesthood. Nevertheless, as Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia has pointed out, citing Vladimir Lossky's definition of Tradition as "the critical spirit of the Church": "[Tradition] is not simply a protective, conservative principle, but primarily a principle of growth and regeneration. . . . [I]t involves a living response to God's voice at the present moment, a direct and personal meeting on our part, here and now, with Christ and the Spirit."[20]

So, we need to ponder what our Orthodox liturgical practices tell us—or should tell us—about who we believe men and women are

[20]Kallistos Ware, "Man, Woman and the Priesthood of Christ," 25–26. Ware's reference to Lossky's definition of Tradition as "the critical spirit of the Church" is from Lossky, "Tradition and traditions," 156.

in relation to Christ and his Church, in other words, whether such practices are "traditions" that reflect certain cultural milieus and historical periods or are manifestations of the theological "Tradition" that undergirds the Church. By clarifying the theological anthropologies underlying various Orthodox views on women's liturgical participation, we will provide a prism to enhance spiritual and theological discernment, particularly in light of patristic views about sex and gender that operate differently at different stages of human existence. Thus, after identifying which stages of theological anthropology are implied by certain liturgical practices, we will consider which stages of theological anthropology may or may not appropriately be applied to the liturgical life of women in the Church, while remaining consistent with our own theology.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL ON WOMEN AND ON MALE-FEMALE RELATIONS

According to almost all the Fathers,[21] God created humanity, male and female, equally in his image. Contrary to the assertions and

[21] Ironically (given the explicitness of Gen 1.27 that both male and female are created in the image of God), most of the early church theologians in the Antiochene tradition, which generally was more literal in its interpretation of Scripture, claimed that woman lacks God's image because she lacks complete authority or dominion since becoming subject to man after the fall, in accord with Gen 3.16. See, for example, St John Chrysostom, *Sermo 2 in Genesim* (SC 433:192–94), especially at ll. 144–45, where he asks in what way man is said to be an image of God, but woman is God's image *no longer* (Greek *ouketi*—this same word is used by Diodore of Tarsus when asking why woman *no longer* bears God's image fully). Importantly, Chrysostom always discusses woman's subjection to man by reference to the fall.

For more on early Antiochene theologians' defining the image of God in terms of dominion or authority, particularly with respect to women, see Nonna

suggestions of some contemporary Orthodox theologians, they draw no parallels between particular human sexes and particular Persons of the Trinity; rather, they unanimously affirm that sexual differentiation as a whole—maleness as well as femaleness—is not part of the image of God since God is neither male nor female.[22] St Gregory of Nyssa, in his treatise *On the Creation of the Human Being*, strongly rejects the notion that our creation as male and female is part of our being created in the image of God:

> We must, then, examine the words carefully: for we find, if we do so, that that which was made "in the image" is one thing, and that which is now manifested in wretchedness is another. "God

Verna Harrison, "Women, Human Identity, and the Image of God: Antiochene Interpretations" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9.2 (Summer 2001): 205–49; and Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), especially ch. 6, "Are Women Images of God?," 191–231.

[22]Syriac patristics scholar and Orthodox theologian Susan Ashbrook Harvey, in her article, "Feminine Imagery for the Divine: The Holy Spirit, the *Odes of Solomon*, and the Early Syriac Tradition" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 37.2–3 (1993): 111–39, examines feminine imagery for all three Persons of the Trinity in the second-century Christian hymnal collection titled the *Odes of Solomon*, as well as in the writings of the fourth-century Ephrem the Syrian. In analyzing the significance of these texts in terms of theological anthropology, Harvey avers that human sex and gender *is* in some sense created in the image of God, but not in a one-to-one ratio, i.e., one human sex does not particularly image one Person of the Trinity. Rather, the use of gendered imagery for the Divine "bears witness to the notion that gender—but not one gender only—is somehow fundamental to both human and divine identity, albeit in ways that do not fit the human social conception (or construction) thereof. Gendered imagery here has its basis in the Godhead, not in the human biological or social order" (Ibid., at 132). Modern Orthodox theologians who have suggested a particular link between men and Christ, on the one hand, and women and the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, include Thomas Hopko and, less rigorously, Paul Evdokimov.

created man," it says; "in the image of God created He him."
There is an end of the creation of that which was made "in the
image": then it makes a resumption of the account of creation,
and says, "male and female created He them." I presume that
every one knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for
"in Christ Jesus," as the apostle says, "there is neither male nor
female." Yet the phrase declares that man is thus divided.

Thus the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one
made like to God, one divided according to this distinction: for
something like this the passage darkly conveys by its arrange-
ment, where it first says, "God created man, in the image of God
created He him," and then, adding to what has been said, "male
and female created He them,"—a thing which is alien from our
conceptions of God.[23]

What this means is that the Fathers interpret Gen 1.27, that God cre-
ated the human being according to his image, "male and female he
created them," in an *inclusive* sense but not in a *normative* sense.
That is, the verse does not say that maleness and femaleness are
aspects of God's own being or that being male and female is what
it *means* to be created in the image of God. Rather, it simply states
that *both* men and women are equally created in the image of God.

While most of the Fathers believe that the reason God made
human beings male and female was for procreation—this is why
none of them believes that sexual relations occurred between man
and woman while they were still in paradise—certainly they do not
all see procreative functions as the only distinction between the
sexes, or as the only gift of sexual difference. St John Chrysostom,
for example, in several of his *Homilies on Genesis* discusses the
importance of companionship and sharing between man and

[23] *De hominis opificio* 16.7–8 (PG 44:181AB; NPNF² 5:405).

woman. To Chrysostom, true companionship requires equality: he uses words such as *isotimos* (equal),[24] *homoousios* (same nature), and *homogenes* (same race) to emphasize this point.

This primeval equality between man and woman was not to last, however. Humans' relationships to God, to creation, and to each other were fatally corrupted as consequences of the fall. One of these negative consequences was male domination over woman, specifically articulated by God in Gen 3.16 ("your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you"). Chrysostom remarks on this change by contrasting the new, unequal relations between the sexes (Stage 3) to their previous, prelapsarian equality (Stage 2) as evidenced in the account of the creation of the woman from the side of the man:

> Wherefore, you see, she was not subjected as soon as she was made; nor, when He [God] brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her: he said indeed that she was "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." (Gen 2.23) but of rule or subjection he no where made mention to her.[25]

While the Cappadocians (St Gregory of Nyssa, his older sister St Macrina and older brother St Basil, and Basil's best friend, St Gregory the Theologian) tend to overlook the significance of this social aspect of the fall, Chrysostom treats it at length. For him, inequal-

[24]It is unfortunate that so many translators of Chrysostom, such as Robert C. Hill in the Fathers of the Church series, translate *isotimos* as "equal in honor" rather than simply "equal". While the word does literally mean "equal in honor," it is the term normally used to refer to persons as equals. The simpler word *isos* (equal) is normally reserved for mathematical amounts or other things easy to compare, and rarely used for persons, who are by nature unique.

[25]*Hom. on 1 Cor* 26.2 (PG 61:214–15; NPNF² 12:150).

ity between the sexes has become the new, God-ordained human order, both punishment for Eve's misuse of her equality to lead Adam into disobedience and salvific protection for woman. While he—in symphony with other Christian writers—affirms the continued spiritual equality of men and women in the postlapsarian human condition, he nevertheless opines that women and men are meant, in this fallen state, to function differently in both society and the Church: men operate in the public sphere of the *agora* (marketplace or forum), women in the private sphere of the home.

## THE EFFECTS OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION ON WOMEN AND ON MALE-FEMALE RELATIONS

Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection change this postlapsarian condition of domination and submission, however, by opening up new avenues to women. Humanity is still postlapsarian biologically (mortal, sexed bodies) and in other ways, but in this AD subdivision of the postlapsarian stage (Stage 4), Christianity has provided women with a new equality through baptism—"in Christ there is no male and female" (Gal 3.28)—and the possibility of a new lifestyle not controlled by the biological imperative of procreation, and therefore not dependent on or subject to men. As St John Chrysostom continually reiterates in his treatises *On Virginity* and *On a Single Marriage*,[26] this life of sexual abstinence, lived either in virginity or in widowhood, frees women from the patriarchal domination of father or husband, an omnipresent reality in late antiq-

[26]A modern English translation of both texts is available in *On Virginity: Against Remarriage*, Sally Rieger Shore, trans., Elizabeth A. Clark, intro. (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983).

uity. While in many of his homilies and other works he clearly distinguishes between men's and women's functions, to promote sexual continence, Chrysostom readily argues that women are as capable as men of handling their own financial affairs and other tasks normally assigned to the "man of the house."

Thus, postlapsarian humanity AD exists in a liminal, "now-but-not-yet" state, with a human nature that still suffers the effects of the fall but for whom the resurrection is an expected future, experienced in some measure even now. The celibate lifestyle advocated by the Fathers and the Church thus serves as a foretaste of the type of life we all shall live in the resurrection (Stage 5). This is why the monastic habit has traditionally been called the *angelic* habit. It recalls Christ's response to the Sadducees (who did not believe in a physical resurrection) when they asked him to whom, out of the seven men to whom she had been married, would a woman be married in the afterlife: "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection" (Lk 20.34–36; cf. Mt 22.30 and Mk 12.25).

While no one claims to know with any certainty what our resurrection bodies will be like, the Fathers typically take as their starting point the Apostle Paul's discussion of the resurrection in I Corinthians 15: belief in the bodily resurrection is essential to being Christian, but the resurrected body will be dramatically different from the one we have now.[27] Patristic discussions of this topic frequently employ the Apostle Paul's term *spiritual body* as shorthand to distin-

[27]Paul uses the analogy of a seed sown into the ground and the plant that develops from that seed; they are the same, but they appear to be vastly different.

guish the "heavy," biological type of body we have now from the still-physical but more ethereal body of the resurrection.

This is the most controversial area of patristic anthropology because most of the Fathers' views with respect to sexual differentiation in the resurrection are radical: they don't believe we will continue to exist as male and female. This idea appears in a number of Fathers and other early Christian writers: SS Clement of Alexandria,[28] Gregory of Nyssa,[29] John Chrysostom,[30] Maximus the Confessor,[31] and even the East Syrian Aphrahat.[32] Both Clement and Chrysostom tie this belief biblically to Christ's response to the Sadducees, mentioned above. They interpret Christ's answer—that the seven-times-widowed woman would be married to none of her husbands since we shall be as the angels—to signify a change in human nature itself in the resurrection. As Chrysostom remarks in his homilies on Matthew,

> But not because they do not marry, therefore are they angels, but because they are as angels, therefore they do not marry. By this He [Christ] removed many other difficulties also, all which things Paul intimated by one word, saying, "For the fashion of this world passeth away."[33]

[28] *Paedagogus* I.4 (10).
[29] *De hominis opificio* 17.2–3 (PG 44:188B–189B; NPNF[2] 5:407).
[30] Chrysostom *Hom. on Colossians* 6.4 (PG 62:342; NPNF[1] 13:287).
[31] *De ambigua* 41 (PG 91:1309B).
[32] *Demonstrations* 12, 13; quoted in Louis Edakalathur, "The Theology of Marriage in the East Syrian Tradition" (Ph.D. diss., Rome, Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1994), 39.
[33] *Hom. in Matt.* 70 (PG 58:658; NPNF[1] 10:428).

## MODELS OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: A SUMMARY

Thus, the understanding of sex and gender varies for different stages of human existence. These stages, while based on Genesis 1 through 3 and certain other biblical texts, do not presume or require a literal interpretation of Scripture. While small variations may be detected, there is a basic outline running through the patristic tradition. God's *eternal plan* is to create humanity according to God's image and likeness, which excludes sexual differentiation, for most of the Greek Fathers. However, God created *prelapsarian humanity* with sexual differentiation out of foreknowledge of the fall, although it apparently had no significance until after the fall. Human sexuality then became a contingent means of reproduction after humanity's sin severed its communion with God and made human nature mortal. This postlapsarian humanity BC has a "heavy" bodily nature, i.e., corruptible and mortal, and, within this disordered and unnatural state, sex has become physically the means of human reproduction (thus, marriage exists only in this stage). According to St John Chrysostom, human sexuality in marriage also provides companionship and communion. On the negative side, however, sexual differences have served socially as a rationale for different and unequal treatment between human beings, with men exerting domination over women.

Since Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, postlapsarian humanity AD has continued to carry the characteristics of its fallen state—including mortality and sexual differentiation—but this is now recognized as a temporary condition, as Christians look toward the resurrection. This eschatological orientation can most clearly be seen in the alternative Christian lifestyles of consecrated celibacy and monasticism. Finally, in the resurrection itself,

humanity will be restored to communion with God: marriage and other patterns of postlapsarian life will cease to exist as *eschatological humanity* is transformed into a non-biological, though still physical, mode of existence which fulfills God's original, non-sexed plan for human nature. It is important to recognize that one need not accept the dominant patristic views of either the first or last stages—that is, that humanity either was meant to exist, and/or ultimately will exist, without the distinction of male and female—in order still to recognize that God intended sexual differentiation to be inconsequential and transcended in the eschatological state.

Thus, when Orthodox—whether theologians, bishops, parish clergy, or laity—disagree about what women may or may not do in the Church, their differing paradigms of women's liturgical participation are usually based on different models of human nature and of the relationship between the sexes, which in turn are based upon these different stages of human existence. In other words, our understanding of how women participate in the church—the nature and limits of participation—is predicated on what *stage*, either consciously or (in most cases) unconsciously, we believe our life as men and women within the Church to be situated (or what stage we believe it *should* be situated).

In fact, the conscious or unconscious philosophy of most Orthodox falls under one of the two postlapsarian categories (BC or AD), with differences in the latter category as to the strength of its eschatological focus. At the same time, most Orthodox views do not *consistently* reflect just one anthropological model with respect to women's participation in the Church. In the life of the Church itself, a dynamic operates among these stages, a dynamic that is sometimes a tension—a result of the fact that we are in the world but not of the world. In our postlapsarian AD (Stage 4) existence, we are still physically in a fallen state, yet we are oriented toward the eschaton.

We have already seen that, on the individual level, we have two lifestyles, both consecrated by God, based on different models or stages. Marriage is a lifestyle based on the postlapsarian stage, and how one understands the marital relationship may be largely based on whether one operates from the BC or the AD subdivision of that stage. In either case, marriage is something consecrated by God for *this* stage of human existence.

At the same time, we also have another lifestyle—also consecrated by God and the Church—which is based on the eschatological stage: monasticism. Monks and nuns are already living that future existence in this life, rather than considering themselves bound by our present postlapsarian existence. Monasticism (and, more generally, asceticism in all its forms) asserts that it is possible, to some degree, to live eschatologically even now, within our fallen stage of existence: acts of fasting and celibacy are ways of exercising self-control over our biological bodies to create unity and harmony between body and soul, and are simultaneously a foretaste of the future freedom from biological necessities.

## APPLYING THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY TO WOMEN'S LITURGICAL PARTICIPATION: THE POSTLAPSARIAN BC MODEL

Let us now examine several historical and modern liturgical practices with respect to women and consider how they reflect different anthropological models, beginning with the postlapsarian BC model. This model is characterized by inequality and male domination, as described in Genesis 3.16 and expanded in I Tim. 2.11–14 (which says that woman was deceived first and therefore may not teach), and is particularly manifested biblically in the Levitical law.

Persons who follow this model tend to apply the social norms of traditional, late antique or Byzantine society to the role of women in the Church: men operate in the public sphere, women in the private or domestic sphere. And, you can see this in different specific practices and attitudes towards women's participation in the Church.

Pain in childbirth, for example, is one of the negative consequences for women given in Gen 3.16; we may extrapolate from that to related procreative functions, especially menstruation. Still an issue in the Orthodox Church today, an examination of church history reveals that it was equally an issue in the early centuries of Christianity. In fact, there were two diametrically opposed views on this in the early church, which reflected the difference between a postlapsarian BC model with its (unconsciously) related notions of Levitical impurity (Alexandria), and a postlapsarian AD model, which consciously recognized that the Levitical law had been superceded by Christ (Antioch).

A mid-third century pope of the Church of Alexandria, Dionysius, wrote a canonical letter that took it for granted that women would not receive Holy Communion or even go to church when they were menstruous:

Concerning women in their menstrual separation (*en aphedrō*),[34] whether it is right for them in such a condition to enter the house of God, I think it unnecessary even to inquire. For I think that they, being faithful and pious, would not dare in such a condition either to approach the holy table or to touch the body and blood of Christ. For even the woman who had the twelve-

[34]This Greek word, *aphedros* ("seated apart"), is the same used in the Septuagint translation in Lev. 12.2 and 15.19, 33. I am grateful to a former student of mine, Fr Paul Schroeder, for bringing this to my attention.

year discharge and was eager for a cure touched not him but only his fringe. It is unobjectionable to pray in any state and to remember the Lord in any condition and to beseech him to obtain aid, but he who is not completely pure in both soul and body shall be prevented from approaching the holy and the holy of holies.[35]

Neither Dionysius nor a fourth-century successor of his, Timothy,[36] seemed even conscious of the broader question their attitude raises: "Are we Christians still under the Law or not?" They simply assumed that the Levitical law should be applied—in other words, they operated out of a Stage 3 model for menstruating (and postpartum) women. Their canonical letters were among over 200 private canons that received elevated authority when they were accepted *en masse*, with no vetting process, at the Council *in Trullo* in 691–692.

On the other hand, early church handbooks and homilies from the region of Antioch rejected the idea of prohibiting menstruous women from receiving the Eucharist, consciously and explicitly arguing on the basis of a postlapsarian AD (Stage 4) model. Thus, two early church orders written in the third and fourth centuries,

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[35]Dionysius of Alexandria, Canon 2 of *Letter to Basilides*, PG 10: 1281A; G.A. Rhalles and M. Potles, Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων, Vol. 4 (Athens: G. Chartophylax, 1854), 7–9, including the commentaries of Zonaras and Balsamon. English translation in Charles L. Feltoe, *The Letters and Other Remains of Dionysius of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 102–103, reproduced in Shaye Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 273–99, at 288.

[36]Questions 6 and 7 in Agapius and Nicodemus, Πηδάλιον (Athens: John Nikolaides, 1908), 669; English translation in Agapius, *The Rudder (Pedalion)*, D. Cummings, trans. (Chicago: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), 893.

the *Didascalia Apostolorum* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, respectively, explicitly criticized those who believed that menstruating women should not receive the Eucharist or otherwise participate in the liturgy or even in prayer. For example, the *Apostolic Constitutions* admonished:

> . . . O woman, when thou art seven days in thy separation, . . . thou standest in need of prayer and the Eucharist, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, as having been guilty of no fault in this matter. For neither lawful mixture [i.e., sexual relations], nor child-bearing, nor the menstrual purgation, nor nocturnal pollution, can defile the nature of a man, or separate the Holy Spirit from him. . . . For he is thy Lord, and the Lord of the universe; and meditate in His laws without observing any such things, such as the natural purgation, lawful mixture, child-birth, a miscarriage, or a blemish of the body; since such observations are the vain inventions of foolish men, and such inventions have no sense in them.[37]

St John Chrysostom echoed these sentiments when discussing the question of women and childbirth in his homilies on Titus and on Hebrews. In *Homily* 33 on Hebrews, for instance, he commented on Heb 13.4 ("Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers."). In his exegesis of the verse, he explicitly condemned ritual impurity with respect to sex and childbirth:

> But let us see in what sense "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled." Because (he [Paul] means) it preserves the believer in chastity. Here he also alludes to the Jews, because

37 *Apostolic Constitutions* VI.27 (SC 329:378–80; ANF 7:462).

they accounted the woman after childbirth polluted: and "whosoever comes from the bed," it is said, "is not clean." [Lev. 15:18] Those things are not polluted which arise from nature, O ungrateful and senseless Jew, but those which arise from choice. For if "marriage is honorable" and pure, why forsooth dost thou think that one is even polluted by it?[38]

So, there was a consistent attitude in the Church of Antioch in the early centuries that opposed the application of Levitical ideas of ritual impurity to the spiritual and liturgical life of the Church. What is particularly striking is that the Antiochene texts very consciously responded to this issue theologically. By contrast, the Alexandrian bishops operated under a postlapsarian BC model (Stage 3) uncritically and *only* with respect to women,[39] while St

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[38] *Hom. on Hebrews* 33 (PG 63: 227D–228A; NPNF[1] 14:516). See David C. Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St John Chrysostom* (South Canaan, PA: St Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1995), 57, especially n. 69, where he also cites Chrysostom's "natural" approach to childbirth in his *Hom. on John* 38 (PG 59: 214D).

[39] When considering the closest male equivalent to menstruants, nocturnal ejaculants (who were equally considered impure under the Levitical code and restricted from worship activities), Dionysius in canon 4 of his letter to Basilides advised that he should "let them . . . be guided by their own conscience as to whether to indulge or not." Canon 4 is also consistent with canon 3, in which the Alexandrian bishop leaves it to the discretion of a married couple whether and for how long to refrain from sexual relations, "in order that they may indulge in prayer, and again come together." Both canons apparently refer to liturgical participation in the Eucharist, as can be seen more clearly in later canonical legislation. Greek text in Ioannes Baptista Pitra, *Iuris Ecclesiastici Graecorum Historia et Monumenta Iussu Pii Ix. Pont. Max. Vol. 1: A Primo p. c. n. Ad VI Saeculum* (Rome: Typis Collegii Urbani, 1864; reprint, Bardi Editore, 1963), 544–45; English translation in Agapius, *The Rudder*, 720–21. Note: the translation in NPNF[2] 14:600, does not contain the complete text of either canon 1 or 3.

John Chrysostom and other Antiochene writers operated under a postlapsarian AD model (Stage 4), consciously affirming the freedom of Christian women (and men) from the pre-Christian strictures of ritual impurity.

This is not to say, however, that Chrysostom consistently operated from an "AD" model that eliminated the effects of the fall. Particularly with respect to male-female relations in the Church and in marriage, he held firmly to the continuing inequality of the sexes that resulted from the fall, often referring to it as "the law" or "the divine law." This was largely rooted in Chrysostom's broader hierarchical model for social and ecclesial interactions, which he believed necessary for humanity in its fallen condition. "Equality creates strife,"[40] he believed, whether in political affairs or in the household, and a sexual division of roles promoted order. Thus, he rejected the idea of women's ordination to the priesthood based on a postlapsarian BC anthropology:

> The divine law indeed has excluded women from the ministry, but they endeavor to thrust themselves into it; and since they can effect nothing of themselves, they do all through the agency of others; and they have become invested with so much power that they can appoint or eject priests at their will: things in fact

There may be other issues at work as well, dealing specifically with *blood* impurity and what Joan Branham labels "competing bloods." See Fonrobert, "The Woman with a Blood-Flow," 136, n. 36; Joan Branham, "Bloody Women and Bloody Spaces" *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 30.4 (Spring 2002): 15–22, at 19–20 (also available online at <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin/articles/branham.html>); and Kristin De Troyer, "Blood: A Threat to Holiness or Toward (Another) Holiness?," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood*, 45–64, at 47ff.

40 *Hom. on 1 Corinthians* 26.2 (PG 61:215; NPNF[1] 12:140, which translates the Greek as "equality of honor causeth contention").

are turned upside down, and the proverbial saying may be seen realized—"The ruled lead the rulers:" and would that it were men who do this instead of women, who have not received a commission to teach. Why do I say teach? for the blessed Paul did not suffer them even to speak in the Church.[41]

It is important to keep in mind that St John Chrysostom's frequent use of rhetorical hyperbole means that we should not take at face value everything that he says; otherwise, he would constantly be contradicting himself. For example, in his homilies on 1 Corinthians, he assumed that women used to prophesy—that is, preach[42]—in the very early church but argued that they no longer did so because Christian women in his era were not of the same spiritual stature as those of apostolic times. In other words, he did not really believe that women were scripturally prohibited from speaking or preaching in church, but he did think their ministry was limited.

## POSTLAPSARIAN BC VERSUS POSTLAPSARIAN AD ANTHROPOLOGY

In the modern church, we can see the influence of this postlapsarian BC model in those Orthodox who believe that women should

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[41]*On the Priesthood* 3.2 (PG 48: 633; NPNF[1] 9:49). A more modern English translation is available in John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, Graham Neville, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 78.

[42]Both the Old Testament prophets and those in the early church castigated their faith communities for not living up to their responsibilities as a people of God, often threatening them with dire consequences if their conduct did not change. In other words, Hebrew and Christian prophets were not fortunetellers, but moral preachers.

generally be excluded from any kind of leadership, or even strongly active, role in the liturgical or teaching life of the church. For example, such persons tend to be opposed to women's preaching and chanting, despite (or, more accurately, in ignorance of) the Church's own history and tradition of women preachers in the early church,[43] and of female choirs (usually virgins or deacons) in the early and Byzantine periods—as evidenced by such diverse texts as the early third century *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus and the eyewitness account by Anthony of Novgorod of the services of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, written about the year 1200. Ironically, those who would restrict women from liturgical activities outside those of the laity as a whole believe that they are being traditional and Orthodox by excluding women from contemporary participation in liturgical activities in which, historically, they have participated.

But beyond the inconsistency of claiming tradition for exclusionary practices that are more recent than older, more inclusive practices, there are grave theological problems inherent in an understanding of women's participation in the Church that is based on a postlapsarian BC model. In essence, it makes normative the same negative consequences of the fall that most people eagerly seek to remedy with respect to strenuous labor, illness, painful childbirth, and premature death. Why is male domination of woman considered "God-ordained" by persons who have no theological opposition to receiving treatment for cancer or using machinery to avoid manual labor?

Moreover, a postlapsarian BC model completely ignores the reality and effects of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, or at least it implicitly assumes that his incarnation, death, and resurrection are somehow irrelevant to the liturgical activities of women in

[43]Acts 21.9 and 1 Cor 11.5, and as commented on by early church fathers such as St John Chrysostom.

the faith community. But, do not Acts, the New Testament epistles, and other early church writings demonstrate how much more actively involved women were in Christian worship than in Jewish worship or even in most pagan rites (at least those for male gods)? Moreover, since the Church historically has not operated from a predominantly Stage 3 model, such a narrow view ignores much of the historical practice of the Church, which restricted women somewhat (e.g., from ordination to the priesthood and the episcopacy) but not fully, and which often provided activities, roles, ministries, and orders parallel to those of men.

An excellent example of such a Stage 4-based (postlapsarian AD) parallel role and order—and of the failure of some Orthodox to recognize it as such—is the female diaconate in the early and Byzantine periods. Despite all the research that has been done on this issue,[44] some Orthodox (and Catholics) continue to deny that women in the Byzantine Church were ordained at the altar as deacons, even though the evidence is incontrovertible.[45] The historical

[44]Scholarly works about the historical female diaconate in the Eastern Church include Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, *Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998); Valerie A. Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church" *Church History* 73.2 (June 2004): 272–316; Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K. D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986); Robert F. Taft, S.J., "Women at Church in Byzantium: Where, When—and Why?" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998): 27–87; Evangelos Theodorou, "Η ‹χειροτονία› ἢ ‹χειροθεσία› τῶν διακονισσῶν" *Theologia* 25.3–4 and 26.1 (July–September and October–December 1954; January–March 1955): 430–601 and 56–76; and Cipriano Vagaggini, "L'ordinazione delle diaconesse nella tradizione greca e bizantina" *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 40 (1974): 145–89.

[45]Only a few church historians dispute the type of ordination and clerical rank of Byzantine female deacons, e.g., Martimort, *Deaconesses*, 156; and Vlassios Pheidas, "The Question of the Priesthood of Women," in *The Place of the Woman in the Orthodox Church and the Question of the Ordination of Women*, ed.

record makes clear that female deacons were considered part of the broader "priesthood" (Greek *hierosyne*)—the ordained orders of bishop, presbyter (priest), and deacon—as evidenced by Justinian's applying that term to them in his legislation.[46] In fact, so little distinguishes the female deacon's rite of ordination from that of male deacons that some Byzantine *euchologia* (service books) did not even bother to repeat the full service for female deacons, instead simply referring readers to the male deacon's ordination rite while noting the two or three places where differences occurred.

It is true that the female deacons' ministry was restricted almost exclusively to women in the Church and, following societal norms in general, was private as opposed to public in nature (e.g., taking the Eucharist to the homes of sick women but not distributing the Eucharist during the Divine Liturgy). However, this parallelism in ordained order with liturgical functional differences mirroring men's and women's social functional differences reflects the post-lapsarian AD model (Stage 4). This is probably the model toward which most Orthodox, consciously or unconsciously, gravitate. It is

Gennadios Limouris (Katerini, Greece: Tertios Publications, 1992), 157–96, at 186–89. However, the evidence is so overwhelming that most scholars—in particular, virtually all scholars specializing in the area of liturgical theology—view Byzantine deaconesses as fully ordained to the diaconate: see, e.g., Taft, "Women at Church in Byzantium," 63–64; Theodorou, "Ἡ «χειροτονία» ἢ «χειροθεσία» τῶν διακονίσσων," 576–601; and Vagaggini, 177–85. Some of the argumentation of those few Catholic and Orthodox scholars who deny that Byzantine female deacons were fully ordained to the diaconate evidences other concerns, most prominently, a desire to maintain intact a broader argument that, historically, women have never been ordained to any of the three "major orders" of diaconate, priesthood, and episcopacy.

[46]Preface to Novel 6 of Justinian: "Μέγιστα ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ δῶρα θεοῦ παρὰ τῆς ἄνωθεν δεδομένα φιλανθρωπίας ἱεροσύνη τε καὶ βασιλεία, ἡ μὲν τοῖς θείοις ὑπηρετουμένη, ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐξάρχουσά τε καὶ ἐπιμελομένη, καὶ ἐκ μιᾶς τε καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀρχῆς ἑκατέρα προϊοῦσα καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπινον κατακοσμοῦσα βίον" CIC III, 35–36.

also, of course, where humanity currently exists along the historical timeline. We can see the liminal nature of this stage in terms of "separate but equal" functions, a kind of complementarity based on a model of men and women as spiritually equal but distinct forms of human existence. The differences between the sexes, according to this model, are reflected both in social norms and also in the practices of the Church.

From a biblical perspective, this Stage 4 model of theological anthropology is based on Gen 1.26–27 (both male and female humanity's being created in the image of God), Gen 2.18–24 (woman's being created from the side of man to be his partner and helper), and Gal 3.28 (the Apostle Paul's baptismal anthropology in which there is "no male and female"). In other words, it is a model of theological anthropology that, with its stronger egalitarian sense, is more prelapsarian, and perhaps more eschatological, than the purely postlapsarian model of Stage 3, based on male domination as enunciated in Gen 3.16.

This model *in practice* has been somewhat inclusive in terms of women's ministries and liturgical participation in the Church, but not entirely egalitarian since certain pastoral and liturgical roles are often defined or restricted by social norms rooted in humanity's fallen condition rather than in a purely eschatological model (e.g., the exclusion of women from the priesthood and episcopacy, or the more restricted liturgical functions of female deacons vis-à-vis their male counterparts). Historically, postlapsarian sexual inequality was assumed to be identical to cultural sexual inequality (e.g., in late antiquity). Thus, the tension created between postlapsarian inequality and eschatological equality means women do and don't do within the Church what women do and don't do within society, with spiritual equality resulting in "separate but (almost) equal" treatment in leadership roles and areas where completely "equal"

would be viewed as too radical. Such a model may provide more liturgical inclusivity for women than one might expect in societies that are strongly patriarchal and sexually defined (e.g., late antique and Byzantine societies), but not the total inclusivity of full anthropological and liturgical equality. Moreover, when combined with an uncritical adherence to Church tradition, such a model may actually provide, in practice, less participatory inclusivity for women than does the broader society (e.g., in Western Europe and North America).

## THE STICKY WICKET: WOMEN'S ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

In terms of theological anthropology, the Orthodox Church has not consistently viewed women's liturgical participation through the prism of humanity's current postlapsarian AD condition, but sometimes has applied (and still does apply) a postlapsarian BC model. Moreover, insofar as the Church does consider the New Covenant to have positive ramifications for women, in practice it often interprets humanity's postlapsarian AD condition in terms of full spiritual equality of the sexes but only partial liturgical equality. This bifurcated approach reflects a generally unexamined tension between a theoretically egalitarian theological anthropology and a history of earlier liturgical practices based in inegalitarian historical social and cultural norms, which are usually understood as reflective of the "God-ordained" fallen condition of humanity.

Such practices, however, must be consciously examined to determine their anthropological and soteriological bases, particularly the strength or weakness of their eschatological focus. The looming question for us in this liminal, postlapsarian AD stage is:

(how) do we believe that men and women are different, and does that difference mean that men and women must have different functions in the liturgical life of the Church? If the Eastern Fathers of the Church are virtually unanimous in believing that sexual differentiation will no longer exist in the resurrection (and even those modern theologians who interpret the Fathers differently recognize that, at the very least, the significance of sexual differentiation is transcended in the eschaton), are we prepared to make eschatological human nature—rather than fallen/postlapsarian human nature—normative for our theological anthropology, especially in terms of women's liturgical participation?

Of course, we are not yet resurrected, and so we are indeed affected by the biological bodies we have now. Modern scientific research has noted the differences which male and female hormones may play in the physical development of the brain (for example, women generally have more connections between the right and left hemispheres than do men) and in certain emotions, or "passions," as the Fathers usually labeled them (the male hormone testosterone, for example, has been proved to increase aggressiveness). However, the patristic witness is unanimous that divine grace, acting in consort with our free will and cultivated through prayer and *askesis* (spiritual discipline), is stronger than our fallen human passions, whether physical or emotional. Thus, men in modern Western societies are not permitted (theoretically, at least) to be violent simply because they have larger amounts of testosterone coursing through their veins than do women; they are expected to use their intellect and will to control their physical and emotional urges. Similarly, in the late antique world of the early Church, at a time when women were considered by the philosophers and scientists of their day to be inherently weaker (hence, inferior), both physically and emotionally, the Eastern church

fathers rejected this notion of feminine weakness and inferiority by radically applying masculine terminology to female saints and martyrs.[47] In other words, they superficially appeared to affirm the socio-cultural gender construction of their society, while in fact subverting it by applying positive "male" characteristics to the women about whom they wrote.

This comes from a patristic anthropology grounded, as discussed earlier, in the idea of the image of God as the core of human existence. As Panayiotis Nellas declared: "Man is understood ontologically by the Fathers only as a theological being. His ontology is iconic."[48] It is for this reason that *none* of the early church fathers believed that men and women have different souls; in fact, most explicitly rejected the idea that sexual differentiation exists on any level beyond the physical body.[49] This is further emphasized by the complete lack of reference, in either biblical or patristic texts, to any gendered basis to the distribution of charisms by the Holy Spirit. Key texts such as 1 Cor 12 list a variety of spiritual gifts and related ecclesial functions, but nowhere assert that a charism is intrinsi-

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[47]St Gregory of Nyssa, in the introduction to his *Life of Macrina*, claimed that his sister so far surpassed the rest of her sex that she should not even be called a woman. The Greek verb *andrizo* (literally, "to be manly," i.e., courageous) was used *for women* by such Fathers as St Basil the Great and St John Chrysostom. For discussion of the patristic use of this verb for women, see Elizabeth A. Clark, "Sexual Politics in the Writings of John Chrysostom" *Anglican Theological Review* 59.1 (January 1977): 3–20, at 15; and Verna E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology" *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 41.2 (October 1990): 441–71, at 445.

[48]Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, Norman Russell, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 33–34.

[49]St Gregory of Nazianzus, e.g., praised the *askesis* and piety of his sister, St Gorgonia, by declaring that her life and actions "proved male and female a distinction of body but not of soul!" See *In laudem sororis Gorgoniae*, 14 (PG 35:805; FC 22:111).

cally "male" or "female" or that the possession of one gift negates the possession of another.

In fact, the idea that there is a particular "charism" or "gift" of maleness/masculinity or femaleness/femininity—what is called "essentializing" because it claims there is an irreducible male or female essence—comes from modern Orthodox theologians; it does not exist in the patristic tradition. Elisabeth Behr-Sigel critiqued this modern tendency of both Western and Eastern theologians, reflecting that "to make this biological differentiation and then to transpose it into the spiritual domain, is this not to ignore the dignity of *anthropos*, that which distinguishes humanity from the animals among whom, according to the biblical account, Adam did not find one with whom to communicate what he needed, another like him?"[50] Kallistos Ware, reflecting on the gifts and ministries enumerated in 1 Cor 12.28 and Eph. 4.11, similarly cautions Orthodox against ascribing spiritual charisms by gender and, in particular, against generalizing female nature: "When we speak about the distinctive 'gifts' of women, we have to be on our guard against making generalizations about 'woman' in the abstract, which reflect cultural stereotypes rather than the actual diversity of women in history and in the modern world."[51]

This emphasis on gifts, functions, and roles as gender-defined is particularly troublesome when the function and behavior of one woman—the Theotokos—is extrapolated to all women. That the Theotokos was not one of the Twelve does not mean that no woman could ever be an apostle. In fact, the Apostle Paul ranks Junia as an apostle in Rom 16.7, and saints such as Mary Magdalene, Thekla,

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[50] Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, "Mary and Women," in *Discerning the Signs of the Times: The Vision of Elisabeth Behr-Sigel* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 101–113, at 101.

[51] Ware, "Man, Woman and the Priesthood of Christ," 23.

Nina, and the empress Helena have been recognized by the Orthodox Church as "Equal-to-the-Apostles" for their own evangelical activities. The Theotokos is unique, and her role in the economy of salvation was and is unique. To lump all women into the same category, that is, to assume that all women must act and serve as Christian women in the same manner as the Virgin Mary—something that is never done with Christian men vis-à-vis Christ or any particular male saint—is to ignore the Church's tradition of canonizing as saints women whose activities and charisms were diverse and to objectify the Theotokos, simultaneously depersonalizing all other women.[52]

In fact, through the Gospel reading assigned for most Marian feastdays, the Church herself refutes those who emphasize the Theotokos' significance as biologically and gender-defined. The Gospel reading is the Martha and Mary story from Luke 10.38–42, where Martha, the dutiful hostess, complains to Christ about Mary's not helping her. Christ gently rebukes her for misplacing her priorities and says that Mary "has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her." As if to drive the point home, the Church in her wisdom does not end the reading there, but appends verses 27–28 of the following chapter: "While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!' But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'" The Church's message is clear: the Theotokos is venerated not just because she is Jesus' mother, but because she was attentive to God, which made her appropriate to become God's chosen vessel.

Galatians 3.28—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—is also important in this regard, and

[52]See Behr-Sigel, "Mary and Women."

was quoted by such Fathers as St Gregory of Nyssa and St Maximus the Confessor specifically to deny the significance of sexual differentiation in terms of theological anthropology. Modern advocates of women's ordination often use this verse in an anthropological sense to assert the abolition in Christianity of distinctions of sex and gender as well as of race and ethnicity, while opponents of women's ordination point out that the biblical verse in fact refers to the inclusiveness and equality of all persons in baptism. The latter are correct about the baptismal context of Paul's declaration of ethnic/racial, class, and sexual equality, but fail to make the necessary connection between baptismal ecclesiology and anthropology. They implicitly assume that how we understand our ecclesial life in the Church is somehow distinct from how we understand who we are as human persons. In fact, the sacrament of baptism is significant in Orthodox theology not only ecclesiologically but also, most crucially, *anthropologically*. Baptism is not only initiation into the life of the Church, the body of Christ, but also the remission of sins. This includes a restoration, at least in part, of our prelapsarian nature, which in turns restores our eschatological potential.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize our three core models and their application to women in the liturgy. The postlapsarian BC model (Stage 3) is biblically grounded in the list of negative consequences of the fall given in Gen 3.16–19, and is usually used to support male domination over women in church and family life and significant limitations on women's liturgical participation, including restrictions on reception of the Eucharist and on more "active" liturgical participation. It is strongly inegalitarian and ignores the importance of Christ's incar-

nation, death, and resurrection on women's liturgical life as members of the faith community. Essentially, it makes our fallen condition, and specifically our fallen condition from *before* Christ, normative for the Church. As such, it is insupportable theologically.

The postlapsarian AD model (Stage 4) recognizes that Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection have consequences for women in the Church since our fallen human nature has had its eschatological potential restored, although we continue to exist in a generally fallen state and in a fallen creation. This model takes account of the liminal nature of our current existence within the Church, living in the present but anticipating the eschaton. In historical and current practice, it asserts a type of spiritual equality while assuming that the liturgical life of women in the Church is affected by our imperfect human condition as lived out in various times and places. Thus, both a spiritual equality of all persons and a functional inequality arises from a dynamic tension between our current, postlapsarian existence and our future, eschatological orientation. This model can encompass a wide variety of views regarding women's liturgical participation. Most of its adherents believe that men and women have complementary roles (Gen 2.18–24) and so are fundamentally different in important ways that affect their liturgical and pastoral participation in the Church (for example, male and female deacons with similar but slightly different functions). However, the tension between postlapsarian and eschatological anthropology in the postlapsarian AD model need not be weighted so strongly toward the postlapsarian. Some who follow this model advocate women's ordination to the priesthood because they believe that an important dimension of human existence is missing as long as the priesthood is exclusively male.

Most who advocate women's ordination to the priesthood, though, follow an anthropological model that is eschatologically oriented

(Stage 5), with its biblical roots in Gen 1.26–27 and Gal 3.28. It, too, can accommodate (to a certain degree) the idea of male-female complementarity, but, more commonly—as, for example, with most of the Greek Fathers—it rejects the ultimate significance of sexual differentiation, even in our current existence, because it has no normative spiritual value: it does not reflect God's image in us, and we shall not continue to exist as male and female in the resurrection.

Proponents of the eschatological model reject the Church's acquiescence to non-egalitarian social norms rooted in a fallen human condition. Those with this eschatological orientation ordinarily distinguish sharply between Tradition as the living theology and faith of the Church and traditions as liturgical and other practices partly shaped by particular cultural contexts. Most adherents to this model believe—in theory, at least—that women may be ordained to *any* ministry or order.[53] So, according to this model, female acolytes need not be limited to women's monasteries, and the functions of female deacons need not be limited to the private or domestic sphere, nor should the eligibility for the female diaconate be any more restrictive than for its male counterpart (as it was in the Byzantine period in terms of age and marital status, not to mention the punishments for moral laxity). Of course, not everyone fits neatly into just one of these three models: for example, there are many nuns who are living a virtually eschatological life already, but who nevertheless believe it proper to submit themselves to certain gender-based restrictions because they are still women in a fallen world.

However, the implications of a non-gendered eschatological anthropology are fairly straightforward. The most controversial

[53]Recognition of pastoral difficulties usually tempers the comments of those who consider the ordination of women to the priesthood as at least a theological possibility.

aspect of applying this model to liturgical theology and practice would be the consideration of the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopacy. The issue of the ordination of women to the priesthood has affected Orthodoxy far more than most Orthodox acknowledge. This has been particularly true with respect to Orthodoxy vis-à-vis the Anglican Church. On the one hand, whole Episcopalian and Anglican parishes have become Orthodox in the United States and Great Britain, many of them out of opposition to the Anglican communion's decision to allow women to be ordained to the priesthood. On the other hand, unknown numbers of Orthodox have become Episcopalian (or joined various Protestant churches), in part at least, for precisely the same reason: that the Episcopal Church ordains women. It is telling that Flora Keshkegian, a woman theologian raised in the Armenian Apostolic Church, was among the first women to be ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church USA.

On the other hand, an eschatological model which deems sexual differentiation to be relatively insignificant does not assume that the priesthood has been lacking for the past two millennia because women have been excluded—men are fully human, with the full range of gifts of the Spirit, as are women. On the other hand, there is no valid *theological* reason not to ordain women to the priesthood if we truly operate from an eschatologically normative anthropology. Thus, the Logos' incarnation as a male human being—which has been seen as significant by many of those who oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church—is irrelevant in terms of an eschatologically oriented anthropology. The argument that Christ's maleness requires the priest's maleness in order for the priest to be appropriately "christic" in his iconic function is illegitimate since (1) the priest liturgically images the Church (which is symbolically female) more

than he does Christ (for example, during the *anaphora*, culminating in the consecration of the bread and wine, he speaks on behalf of the Church); and (2) even more importantly, given Orthodoxy's incarnational soteriology, any theological argument based on the significance of the maleness of Christ has disastrous consequences for Orthodox soteriology with respect to women. After all, if, as St Gregory the Theologian opined, "that which is not assumed is not healed" (referring to Christ's taking on of our fallen, mortal human nature in order to restore it), how can female humanity be saved if Christ's maleness so differentiates him from female humanity that a woman cannot be an icon of him?

Of course, the traditional theology of the Church makes no such claim. None of the Fathers ascribed any particular significance to Christ's maleness beyond, as both St Gregory the Theologian and St Theodore of Stoudios point out, its fulfilling the prophecy in Is 8.3 about a virgin's giving birth to a son.[54] Similarly, Constantinos Yokarinis places the question of the significance of Christ's maleness in the broader context both of Orthodox soteriology and of the relative normative value of our postlapsarian versus eschatological ontology:

[54] St Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 45, 13 (PG 36:641A; NPNF[2] 7:427); St Theodore of Stoudios *Antirrhetics* III, 45 (PG 99:409D). Gregory also uses the imagery of Christ as the paschal lamb, and describes Christ as male because of his role as a second Adam who must be stronger than the first one. The term "virgin" in the Isaiah prophecy is from the Septuagint Greek translation used by the early Fathers (and by most of the Orthodox Church today); the Masoretic Hebrew text uses a term that generally means "young girl." For an analysis of St Theodore's view of Christ's maleness in connection with his anthropology and Christology, see Valerie A. Karras, "The Incarnational and Hypostatic Significance of the Maleness of Jesus Christ According to Theodore of Stoudios" *Studia Patristica* 32 (1996): 310–14.

Priesthood functions and is expressed in the Eucharist. The church is a sacramental body; and the sacraments are a real participation in the incorruptible life of the body of Christ. Can we, while experiencing our union with Christ, invoke conditions of sin—the division between male and female—to justify theologically the exclusion of women from the priestly office?[55]

In other words, the division of functions along gender lines, and particularly the exclusion of one sex from the highest positions of pastoral, liturgical and theological ministry and authority, reflects the sinfulness of our *postlapsarian* state. The recognition that this segregation and exclusion is part of our disordered, fallen existence—and clearly not part of what is intrinsic or ontological to human nature and human relations—should cause us pause as Orthodox Christians. Do we really want to advocate for the normative value of a negative consequence of the fall, especially at the same time that we try to alleviate or mitigate the other negative consequences enumerated in Gen 3.16–19 (disease, toilsome work, pain in childbirth, and even death)?

It is important to recognize the significance of this eschatological orientation not only with respect to the ordination of women and other aspects of women's liturgical life, but more broadly in a number of different areas of our lives. As Orthodox Christians, we need to ponder the question, "Are we more eschatologically oriented in other areas of Christian life than we are in areas that have to do

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[55]Constantinos N. Yokarinis, "The Priesthood of Women: A Look at Patristic Teaching," in Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald, ed., *Orthodox Women Speak: Discerning the "Signs of the Times"* (Geneva; Brookline, MA: WCC Publications/Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1999), 167–176, at 170. For a much deeper and more systematic discussion, see Yokarinis' *Η χειροτονία των γυναικών στο πλαίσιο της οικουμενικής κίνησης* (Athens: Epektase, 1995).

specifically with the liturgical roles of men and women in the Church?" Insofar as that answer is "yes," we are guilty of what may be termed sexual exceptionalism. Given this tendency, we as Orthodox need to challenge ourselves: "Why are we unwilling to apply to women's liturgical life in the Church the same eschatological orientation that informs us in other areas of our Christian life?"

# READING THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

## James C. Skedros

The saint in the Orthodox Church is a ubiquitous figure. Enter into most Orthodox churches, those of recent origin and those from the past, and one will typically be greeted by an array of iconographic depictions of saints. The liturgical cycle of the Orthodox Church is inundated with the commemoration of numerous saints. Each time the Matins (*Orthros*) service is celebrated, a long litany of martyrs, bishops, ascetics, and various saintly men and women is read, thereby connecting the worshipper with the heavenly hierarchy of the saints and the historical trajectory of the Orthodox Church. The saint and his or her veneration permeate the entire life and fabric of the Orthodox Church.

The contemporary English-speaking world has available translations of complete lives of hundreds of Greek, Russian, Serbian, Coptic, and other saints.[1] The ancient and contemporary popularity

[1]Some of the more accessible translations of Greek lives of saints from the early Christian and Byzantine periods are A. Talbot, ed., *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998); A. Talbot, ed., *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996); J.M. Peterson, ed., *Hand-*

of the holy man and woman in the Orthodox Church is paralleled by an expanding academic and widespread interest in the study of the lives of the saints. The academic study of the lives of saints, commonly referred to as "hagiography," is currently being carried out in the various disciplines of history, anthropology, sociology and theology.[2] This academic or scientific approach to the lives of the saints frequently questions the veracity of the stories found in the lives and challenges the very existence of certain saints. How, then, might an Orthodox Christian who reads texts with a critical and historically conscientious eye consider the lives of the saints in view of the miraculous and often implausible events that they articulate? In this paper I will argue that there is, by virtue of the role and function the saint occupies within the Orthodox Christian ecclesial community, a distinctive method for reading the lives of the saints within the Orthodox tradition. Without dismissing the methodologies utilized within the scholarly community, there is an Orthodox hermeneutic for reading the stories of the saints that, I hope to show, is founded upon the incorporation of the saint within the living tradition of the Church. Before considering this, a few words are in order concerning the sources for the study and reading of the lives of the saints.

maids of the Lord (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996); Cyril of Scythopolis, The Lives of the Monks of Palestine, trans. by R.M. Price (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991); and E.A. Dawes and N. Baynes, Three Byzantine Saints, 2nd ed. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977).

[2] See the classic study by H. Delehaye, The Legends of the Saints, trans. V.M. Crawford (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961) and more recently, S. Wilson, ed., Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

## COLLECTIONS OF LIVES OF THE SAINTS

Hagiography refers to the scholarly study of the saints and the texts associated with them. The term itself poses some initial problems. Essentially, it denotes a literary genre as well as the critical, academic study and evaluation of this literature. There is no classical or patristic Greek equivalent for the word hagiography. Byzantine lives of the saints were never referred to as hagiography. Rather, in Byzantine manuscripts containing lives of the saints, the common formula or title affixed to the Greek text of the life of a particular saint is the phrase: βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ἁγίου/τῆς ἁγίας . . . , that is, the "Life and Conduct of Saint. . . ." The two words βίος (*bios*, "life") and πολιτεία (*politeia*, "conduct") used in this formula are significant: βίος has the sense of biological life, that is, the cycle from birth to death, and πολιτεία carries the meaning of life within a community. In classical Greek, πολιτεία refers to the relation of the citizen to the state. Byzantine (and Orthodox) hagiography was thus fundamentally interested in both the "facts" of the saint's life and the role the saint played in the life of the wider Christian community.

As a field of academic inquiry, hagiography begins with John Bollandus, a Jesuit who published at Antwerp in 1643 the first two volumes of the *Acta Sanctorum*, and continues with his followers, the so-called "Bollandist Fathers." The *Acta Sanctorum* is a historical endeavor seeking to establish a list of saints for each day of the year as commemorated by the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the saints found in the *Acta Sanctorum* are also commemorated by the Orthodox Church since these saints lived during the early and medieval periods of Christianity prior to the separation of the Latin and Greek churches. The *Acta* is more than simply a catalogue. Each volume of the *Acta* contains critical editions of the lives, martyrdom accounts, miracle collections, and other documents associated with

the saints of the day—that is, they bring together the hagiographic dossier of a given saint. The *Acta Sanctorum* remains incomplete. The most recent volume, number 68, was published in 1940 as the *Propylaeum* of December.[3] The work of the Bollandist Fathers also continues in two other major publications, the journal *Analecta Bollandiana*, first published in 1882, and the monograph series *Subsidia Hagiographica*, first published in 1886, both of which produce specialized studies in hagiography as well as critical editions of hagiographic texts.

The contribution of the Bollandists should not, however, overshadow similar attempts made in the Orthodox East to compile and organize its own vast hagiographic repertoire. Though certainly not comparable in historical scope, the Orthodox Church through the centuries has produced several collections of lives of saints that have influenced the academic and religious life of the Church. These collections, unlike the Bollandist enterprise, were intended for use by both clergy and laity and not meant as rigorous academic publications to be read only by the savant. Taken together, these various collections of saints' lives constitute an unofficial, and incomplete, canon of hagiography for the Orthodox Church.

Although lives of the saints circulated throughout the early Byzantine period, it was the late tenth-century collection of Symeon Metaphrastes which gave the *Menologion*—a collection of lives of saints arranged chronologically according to the date of the liturgical celebration of the saint in the Church calendar—its fundamental form. Symeon's collection of 150 lives in ten volumes was a

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[3]The *Acta Sanctorum* is published according to the months of the year, with the first two volumes covering the month of January. The most recently published volume, volume 68 [H. Delehaye, ed., *Propylaeum ad acta sanctorum Decembris* (Brussels, 1940)], does not deal with saints commemorated for December, but rather is a critical edition of the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*.

revolution in Byzantine hagiographic literature.[4] It soon became the standard of all later *menologia*. Symeon did more than simply compile lives. He reworked most of the lives of the saints he had in his possession, standardizing the language of the texts by introducing several traditional hagiographic themes or *topoi* into the lives, resulting in a certain homogenization of the texts. From the eleventh century onwards, these texts became customary reading during Matins in monastic communities. The impact of Symeon's *Menologion* on the Orthodox Church cannot be overstated since the only knowledge we have of many early Christian and Byzantine saints come from Symeon's work.

At around the same time that Symeon's *Menologion* appeared, the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* was also produced.[5] It contains brief notices, usually not more than a handful of sentences, of the saints commemorated for every day of the year. These daily commemorations reflect the fixed festal calendar for the Church of Constantinople in the later Middle Ages. Many of these texts have been incorporated into the *Menaion* and the *Triodion* of the Greek Orthodox Church up to the present.

In the Greek-speaking world, the compiling of lives of saints did not end with the fall of Constantinople. In 1607 a collection of lives by Maximos Margounios, Bishop of Kithera, was published at Venice. It was a highly stylized reworking of Symeon Metaphrastes' *Menologion*. Some two hundred years later, Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain (Mount Athos) retranslated this collection of Margounios into a more palatable Modern Greek idiom and added additional

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4Symeon Metaphrastes, *Patrologia graeca*, 114–16. For a full discussion of the hagiographic work of Symeon see Christian Hoegel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2002).

5H. Delehaye, ed., *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta sanctorum Novembris* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1902).

saints for commemoration. Nikodemos' *Synaxaristes*, as it is called, contains 650 lives of saints and the names of 59,148 otherwise unknown saints.[6] It was Nikodemos' work that became the basis for the current standard *Synaxaristes* of the Church of Greece prepared by K. Doukakes and published in fourteen volumes in Athens between 1889 and 1897.[7]

The contemporary Greek version of the *Synaxaristes* is paralleled in the Russian Church by the work of Demetrius, Metropolitan of Rostov and Jaroslav (1651–1709). The first volume of his work, covering the months of September, October and November, appeared in 1688 with two later volumes to follow, all published at Kiev.[8] In the Serbian Church, Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic published the *Prologue from Ochrid*, a Serbo-Croatian translation of an older Slavonic *Prologue* which was essentially a *synaxarion* accompanied with short, spiritually directed discourses or sermonettes to serve as additional daily reading. This Serbo-Croatian text was translated into English between 1979 and 1983 and has found a popular audience in the English-speaking Orthodox world.[9] These and other col-

[6]Nikodemos the Hagiorite, Νέος Συναξαριστής 4 vols. (Venice, 1819).
[7]Konstantinos Doukakes, Μέγας Συναξαριστής 2nd ed. in 12 vols. (Athens, 1948–1966). An abridged English translation is provided by George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints* 2nd rev. ed. in 4 vols. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1990). An abridged and adapted French translation has been produced by Makarios, a monk of the monastery of Simons Petras on Mount Athos, *Le Synaxaire. vies des saints de l'Eglise Orthodoxe*, 6 vols. (Thessalonique: Editions To Perivoli Tis Panaghias, 1987–1996).
[8]An English translation is underway and has produced to date volumes for September through January, see Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, trans. by Thomas Marretta (House Springs, MO: Chrysostom Press, 1994).
[9]Nikolai Velimirovic, *The Prologue from Ochrid: Lives of the Saints and Homilies for Every Day in the Year* 4 vols., trans. by Mother Maria (Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1985). The collections listed here are not exhaustive. Other Ortho-

lections of lives of saints within the various Orthodox Churches reflect the importance given to the preservation and the passing on of the stories associated with the saints. The medieval and modern collections of Orthodox saints bring together the numerous "heroes" and exemplars of the Christian life for the edification of the faithful, be they laypeople, monastics, clergy, or hierarchs.

Even with such a plethora of examples, there is a fundamental difference between the work of the Bollandist Fathers and the compilations of lives of the saints made within the Orthodox Church. The various collections of saints' lives made throughout the history of the Orthodox Church have as their primary purpose the edification of the faithful, the perpetuation of the veneration of a given saint, and the integration of the saint into the community of believers. The purpose of the Bollandist Fathers, however, is quite different. The web site of the Bollandists describes quite succinctly the scope of the *Acta Sanctorum*:

> [F]or each saint [it is necessary] to build up a file containing the diverse elements which will be discussed in the commentary. One must trim away any repetitions, track down any obvious falsehoods, and distinguish fictitious persons born only of variant spellings of the names of authentic saints and those of whom we possess what might turn out to be merely fables.[10]

Of fundamental concern to the Bollandist project, then, is the determination of the historical veracity of the lives of the saints (the authenticity of the βίος, to state it in a slightly different way). This view privileges the historical approach by examining the surviving

dox churches (the Romanian, Georgian, and so forth) have their own collections of lives of saints.

[10] <http://www.kbr.be/~socboll/>, June 15, 2006.

evidence for any given saint and then, based upon historical and critical methodologies, determining if a particular saint can be said to have ever existed.

The impact of the work of the Bollandists has not been limited to the scholarly community but has influenced significantly the general approach to the lives of the saints in the Roman Catholic Church. A saint for whom Bollandist scholarship determines never existed is often no longer commemorated in the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. For sure, Orthodox scholars, especially those who work in the fields of hagiography and church history, make use of the scholarship of the Bollandists. Yet, for the Orthodox Church, the results of Bollandist scholarship in determining or assigning levels of authenticity to particular saints have had no noticeable impact. The Orthodox Church has never systematically examined its rolls of saints to determine either which saints actually did exist or which saints deserve more recognition than others. Rather, such decisions have usually been made in an organic and grassroots manner in which the piety and practice of the local church influences the commemoration of a particular saint.

## ST SYMEON, ST DEMETRIOS, AND ST STYLIANOS

The lack of a systematic, analytical method within the Orthodox Church for determining the historical authenticity of a saint can be illustrated with three examples from the liturgical calendar of the Greek Orthodox Church. On September first each year, the Orthodox Church commemorates the feast of St Symeon the Stylite who died in AD 459 after spending more than 40 years atop a pillar in the desert outside of Antioch, Syria. Symeon is known as the first stylite saint, that is, someone who practiced an extreme form of

asceticism and self-mortification by living, often times completely exposed to the elements, on top of a pillar of varying height. Symeon's fame grew rapidly and spread widely during his lifetime. Pilgrims from local villages and from as far as Armenia, Spain, and Britain flocked to the saint to receive his blessing, spiritual guidance, and healing and to see the spectacle of an emaciated man standing for hours in deep prayer. Numerous stories record how, from his pillar, the saint healed people of various physical and spiritual ailments and worked other miracles: from the healing of the crippled son of an Armenian governor to the replenishing of a dried village spring. After his death, his empty column continued to be a place of pilgrimage. St Symeon was a historical figure. Contemporary eyewitness accounts of his life on the pillar survive as do the archaeological remains of the base of the pillar along with the massive church and monastic complex that was built around it.[11] Numerous scholarly studies have been written regarding the saint. Nonetheless, with the exception of the Syrian or Antiochian Church, St Symeon's commemoration is rather limited within the Orthodox world. In the Greek Orthodox Church, his feast day on September first is eclipsed by the commemoration of the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year and, more recently, by the introduction of the Feast of the Environment.[12] Clearly a historical figure of great piety and sanctity, St Symeon remains relatively unknown to many Orthodox Christians.

One of the most beloved saints among Greek and Slavic Orthodox Christians is St Demetrios of Thessaloniki, an early Christian

[11]*The Lives of Simeon Stylites.* Translated with an introduction by Robert Doran (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1992).

[12]In 1989, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios inaugurated a liturgical thanksgiving and supplication for the environment to be held annually on September 1.

martyr who was martyred in Thessaloniki around AD 303. Unlike St Symeon, historically verifiable accounts of the saint's life do not exist. The earliest written stories about the saint date to the seventh century and offer very little biographical information. There is, however, a collection of posthumous miracles attributed to the saint that was produced around AD 620, and a church built in his honor dates to the fifth century.[13] The city of Thessaloniki has maintained a continuous and vibrant veneration of the saint from the early Christian period to the present. In the earliest and shortest written account (ninth century) of his martyrdom more space is devoted to the story of the martyrdom of Nestor, a follower of Demetrios, than to Demetrios himself. Most scholars dismiss even the little knowledge we possess about St Demetrios since its historical veracity is suspect. Nevertheless, the church of St Demetrios in Thessaloniki, which marks the spot of his martyrdom, was one of the most important pilgrimage sites throughout the Byzantine period and his veneration has continued unabated down to the present.[14] The impact and role of the veneration of St Demetrios among Christians in Thessaloniki, the Balkans, and elsewhere is certainly disproportionate to the available historically verifiable information about the saint.

The third example is that of St Stylianos. Among Greeks today, the personal name Stylianos is quite popular. For Greeks living in

[13]For the Greek text of the miracles see P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des Miracles de saint Démétrius*, vol. 1, *Le texte* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1979). For an English adaptation of some of the miracles see R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and Its Icons* (London: George Philip, 1985).

[14]On the early Christian veneration of St Demetrios see, J. Skedros, *St Demetrios of Thessaloniki: Civic Patron and Divine Protector* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999). For the basilica of St Demetrios as a pilgrimage site, see Ch. Bakirtzis, "Pilgrimage to Thessaloniki: The Tomb of St Demetrios" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (2002).

English-speaking countries, such names as Steve, Stanley, and Stella are closely anglicized versions of the name. According to the Modern Greek *Synaxaristes*, St Stylianos was an ascetic figure from Paphlagonia in Asia Minor who lived in the fifth century. During his lifetime, St Stylianos showed particular concern for orphaned children, and the commemoration of the saint in the Orthodox Church identifies one of his key characteristics as a protector of children. In the Greek ecclesiastical calendar his feast day is November 26. Hippolytus Delehaye, the great Bollandist scholar of the last century, argued that St Stylianos was merely the creation of a word play in Greek. According to Delehaye, in the early ecclesiastical calendars (fourth to seventh centuries) one St Alypios, a fifth-century stylite saint from Paphlagonia, is commemorated on November 26, whereas there is no equivalent mention of St Stylianos for that day, or for any other day in the calendar. Delehaye contended that "Stylianos" (Στυλιανός) is actually a cognomen (surname) for the Greek word *stylos* (στύλος), which means "pillar." Since "stylite" (ὁ στυλίτης) was an epithet for Alypios and no independent evidence to confirm the existence of St Stylianos has been found, Delehaye concluded that "Stylianos" was a scribal creation confused with the identity of St Alypios. The St Stylianos venerated today in the Greek Orthodox Church, according to Bollandist scholarship, never existed.[15]

Having noted the examples of St Symeon, St Demetrios, and St Stylianos, how are Orthodox scholars and faithful to respond? Should we concern ourselves with the academic and historical study of the lives of the saints? Or must we constantly be changing the hats we wear: one for the academy (and our intellectual curiosity) and one for the halls of our churches? Certainly, if Orthodox schol-

[15]H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1923), lxxxi–lxxxv.

ars and informed lay people are to remain intellectually honest within their various fields of academic inquiry, we cannot turn away from the work of the Bollandists. It is simply too good and too useful. However, this does not mean that we accept Bollandist scholarship or the historical enterprise as the only tools with which one can "authentically" interpret or read the lives of the saints. Rather, I suggest that individuals who are committed both to the academic enterprise and the Church not limit themselves to historical inquiries but expand the questions asked of hagiographic literature—precisely because the lives of the saints function differently in the context of a believing Orthodox community than they do under the "microscope" of scholarship.

## DEFINING SAINTHOOD

To my knowledge, the Orthodox Church has never formally articulated a theological or doctrinal definition of sainthood. This is reflected in the lack of a universally accepted procedure for the canonization of saints in the Orthodox Church. Paucity of historical evidence prohibits a precise reconstruction of how saints were officially recognized by the Church in the first thousand or so years of its life. Just as it is practiced today among the autocephalous Orthodox churches, canonization in the early and medieval periods in the East was a local phenomenon. Each individual Orthodox church (e.g., the Patriarchate of Alexandria) identified holy men and women whose sanctity was either recognized during their lifetime or confirmed posthumously (by eyewitness reports) through the performance of miracles.

The identity and veneration of future saints of the Church more often than not originated at the grassroots level among the laity and

was only later given official sanction or endorsement by the Church. Recognition of a saint by ecclesiastical authorities was simply expressed through the adoption of the commemoration of a saint within the liturgical calendar of a local church (e.g., the *Synaxarion of Constantinople*) though at times such recognition was given by a decision of a synod of bishops representative of a particular autocephalous Orthodox Church. In the case of St Demetrios of Thessaloniki, however, one finds no evidence of any official episcopal recognition or canonization. Rather, the identification of the sanctity of St Demetrios, as with many other Byzantine saints, was confirmed and sustained through the production of icons of the saint and other objects that recorded his sanctity and made available his intercessory powers to the believing public. For St Demetrios, this included a magnificent five-aisle basilica, a sacred ciborium believed to contain his relics and located in the nave of the basilica, mosaic icons within the church, a collection of hymnography extolling the saint's virtues, and above all a collection of stories about his life and the many miracles attributed to him after his death. All those things that present-day Orthodox Christians would intuitively expect to be a part of the veneration of a saint—iconography, hymnography, attestation of miracles, and evidence of personal piety—were present in the recognition of sainthood in the early and medieval church yet, without any prescribed canonization process being implemented on a wider scale.

It was not until the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Byzantium that a more systematic process for canonization emerges. There are several examples from this period of canonization by synodal decree.[16] Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos records the

[16] R. Macrides, "Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1981), 83. On canonization in the Orthodox Church see, S. Konstanti-

canonization process of St Gregory Palamas, who was canonized a mere ten years after his death. Although the evidence for earlier canonization is scant, it does seem that, by the fourteenth century there was, at least in Constantinople, a movement toward a formal synodal recognition of sanctity. The Synod of Jassy, a synod of Orthodox Churches held in Romania in 1642 and endorsed by the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Moscow, issued the following criteria for the canonization of saints: (1) orthodoxy (2) perfection in virtue which can be demonstrated by defending the faith even to the point of death, and (3) evidence of supernatural signs and miracles.[17]

Such broad parameters for canonization in the Orthodox Church might be further illuminated by a definition of sainthood or holiness. Again, no such doctrinal or dogmatic definition of sanctity exists. There is no mention of the veneration of the saints in the Nicene Creed, while there is the terse statement in the so-called Apostles' Creed, popular in the West after AD 800, which refers to the "communion of the saints." The closest that one comes to a formal discussion of the saints in a conciliar context (and thereby, in a context acceptable to all Orthodox churches) is the Seventh Ecumenical Council held at Nicaea in AD 787. During the sixth session of the council, a passage was read from the iconoclast Ampilochius of Iconium stating: "We should not endeavor to depict on boards with colors the carnal faces of the saints; we do not need these. What

nou, "Περὶ ἀναγνωρίσεως τῶν Ἁγίων ἐν τῇ Ὀρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησία" Theologia 26 (1956): 609–15; P. Garret, "Canonization" Sacred Art Journal 11 (1990): 55–82; and E. Golubinskii, Istoriia kanonizatsii sviatykh v Russkoi tserkvi, 2nd rev. ed. (Moscow, 1903).

   [17]In the Russian Orthodox Church canonization is often referred to as "glorification," although the Greek word for canonization is ἀναγνώρισις which means "recognition."

we need, instead, is to imitate their conduct through virtue."[18] In response, the council noted,

[W]e do not praise the saints, nor do we represent them in painting, because we like their flesh. Rather, in our desire to imitate their virtues, we retell their life-stories in books and we depict them in iconography, even though they have little need to be praised by us in narratives or to be depicted in icons. Yet, as we have said, we do this for our own benefit. For it is not only the sufferings of the saints that are instructive for our salvation, but also this very writing of their sufferings . . .[19]

Icons function like the lives of the saints: both are didactic in that they lead one towards a life of virtue. Later on in the *Acta* of the sixth session of the council, this theme is reiterated: "Those holy men of all times who pleased God, [their] biographies have remained in writing for our benefit and for the purpose of our salvation."[20] Thus on the didactic and mimetic level, hagiography functions like iconography.

The role and function of the saint in the Orthodox Church is more than didactic. Just as the icon is not simply didactic, but also can be a vehicle of grace, an aesthetic enhancement for worship, and an instrument through which honor can be given to the prototype depicted in the image, the role of the saint and his or her life is not limited to the realm of the educational. The saint in the Orthodox Church is an intercessor. In the eleventh session of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) bishops and clergy from Constantinople

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[18] Daniel Sahas, *Icon and Logos: Sources in Eighth-century Iconoclasm* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 125.

[19] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 125–26.

[20] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, 163.

exclaimed, "Flavian lives on after death! The martyr will pray for us."[21] St John of Damascus, writing in Book 4 of his *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* highlights this role of the holy person in the life of the Church. "Are not the patrons of the entire race to be honored," asks John, "who make petitions to God in our behalf?"[22] Some eight hundred years later, Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople (1572–1595) revisits the passage just cited from St John in his famous exchange of letters with a group of Lutheran theologians at Tübingen. The Lutheran theologians acknowledged the value of imitating the virtuous and courageous lives of the saints, but denied the possibility of offering them veneration or supplication. In response, Jeremiah quotes St John of Damascus adding that "through the invocation of the saints, demons are driven out, sicknesses are banished, temptations are averted."[23] Saints in the Orthodox Church thus serve didactic, kerygmatic, protective, and intercessory roles.

## AN ORTHODOX HERMENEUTIC OF HAGIOGRAPHY

What function, then, does hagiography play in the life of the Orthodox Church? How is an Orthodox Christian to respond to the often morbid and extreme examples of Christian asceticism found in

[21] *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, trans. with introduction and notes by Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), 3: 14.

[22] St John of Damascus *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* Book IV.15 (Fathers of the Church, vol. 37, 369).

[23] The correspondence was undertaken at the initiative of the Lutherans and began with the forwarding to Patriarch Jeremiah II of a Greek translation of the Augsburg Confession of 1530. See G. Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1982), 191.

some lives? Is one required to believe the numerous miraculous and even fanciful tales that comprise many of the lives? Was St Katherine literally transported from Alexandria to Mt Sinai? Were there dragons in St George's day? How is one to understand the exhibitionist tendencies of the stylite saints? These are only some of the many challenges presented by the stories contained in the lives of the saints.

As important as these questions might be, and as much as they have become stumbling blocks for believers and non-believers alike, they are, in my estimation, the wrong questions. Such questions occupy our minds since they relate to the attention-grabbing aspects of the lives of the saints. These questions require that we dissect the life of a saint, as if we were in a laboratory, to discover what, if any of it, is authentic, real, factual.

Such a scientific approach will produce scientific results. It may help us determine what is historically accurate in the text and what is pious fiction. Yet the text was not written for such a reading; the lives of the saints were not written to be placed under the scrutiny of the historian. As useful and informative as such an approach is, it too often leads to a historical and unattached reading of the text. Andrew Louth's observations about interpreting Scripture can be applied to our discussion here:

> . . . in interpreting a piece of writing it is not a matter of my attempting to reconstruct the original historical context in which it was written and thus to divine what was originally meant in an act of imagination, but rather a matter of my listening to what was once written, listening across a historical gulf which is not empty, however, but filled with the tradition that brings this piece of writing to me, and brings me not only that piece of writing but preconceptions and prejudices that

enable me to pick up the resonance of the images and arguments used in whatever it is I am seeking to understand.[24]

A proper reading of the lives of the saints for Orthodox Christians takes place in the context for which the texts were written, in the context of the lived, Christian tradition and community. Hagiography within the Orthodox tradition is not an exercise in literalism.

Every saint needs a hagiographer. Another way of saying this is that every saint needs a community. It is one thing to acknowledge the innumerable unknown saints throughout the history of Christianity, it is another to know them. A saint is known inasmuch as a saint has been made known through the production of vitae, miracle stories, icons, and so forth. Here, monasticism has played an essential role in the veneration of saints since the monastery was (and still is) frequently the venue where the production of the materials related to the veneration of a saint was produced. A life of a saint is not a creation in a vacuum. Therefore, a life ought to be read or interpreted within the community for which it was produced. On one level this suggests that all hagiography is local, that is, historically and culturally specific. Most often, the initial impetus and impact of the production of a life of a saint is local. That is, hagiographic texts place their main protagonist in a particular geographic location—thus giving the veneration of the saint a focal point. The life of the saint contributes to the creation of communal identity—an identity that will be necessary for the "proper" reading of the text—by associating the saintly hero with a particular locale. Numerous examples could be cited: St Demetrios at Thessaloniki, St Nicholas at Myra, St John Maximovitch at San Francisco, and so on.

[24]Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 106–7.

Hagiography not only creates community by associating a particular saint with a given community, but it also reintegrates the saint into the community of believers. For example, St Mary of Egypt, after her conversion at the Holy Sepulcher, retreats to the Judean desert and spends the remaining forty-seven years of her life encountering no one except the priest monk Zosimos, at the end of her life. Throughout her lifetime, St Mary was effectively cut off from the visible community of the Church. Had Zosimos never encountered her, or had Sophronios, the author of her vita, never written about her, she would have remained a saint known only to God. It is precisely because her story was written down that she becomes incorporated into the life of the Church. It is through her written life that St Mary is brought back into the consciousness of the ecclesial community.

The case of St Stylianos is not any different. Whether or not he is a fictitious saint, whether or not he is a creation of his hagiographers, is secondary. What is important is the story of the saint and how his story becomes incorporated into the community of the faithful. We would do well to remember that, in most languages, the words for history and story are the same.[25] The stories contained in the lives of the saints have resulted in the creation of communal identities. Somewhere in the history pages of the Orthodox Church, the story of St Stylianos, whether history or fiction, has been the direct cause for the bringing together of Christians into community. An example of this can be found in modern day Thessaloniki. Next to the Aristotle University is a small church dedicated to St

[25]Peter Bouteneff, "Reading the Lives of the Saints: Metaphors, Miracles, and inter-Orthodox Rapprochement," in Else Marie Wiberg Pedersen and Johannes Nissen, eds., *Cracks in the Walls: Essays on Spirituality, Ecumenicity and Ethics. Festschrift for Anna Marie Aagaard on the Occasion of Her 70th Birthday* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2005), 133.

Stylianos. When I was living in Thessaloniki as a student, I would pass the church almost every day. There was hardly ever any activity in the church. In fact, it always seemed to be closed. However, on November 26, the feast day of the saint, the church came alive. On that day hundreds gathered to celebrate Matins and Divine Liturgy for the feast of the saint. On that day, community was created and it was St Stylianos who had given that particular community of believers their identity for those few short hours.

Hagiography acts not only as a community builder on the local level, but on the universal level as well. Ask any student of hagiography about the characteristic features of hagiography and they will rattle off a litany of several *topoi* or themes that are usually present in varying degrees in most saints' lives. The common themes of miraculous and noble birth, dedication to God at a young age, asceticism, flight, obedience, love of neighbor, prayer, love of God, miracles, and so on establish the community beyond the local level. Hagiography serves as a means through which a common Christian vision can be shared and maintained. The familiar literary conventions of hagiography have helped preserve an Orthodox cultural identity throughout the centuries.

Understanding hagiography in this way points one away from questions of authenticity. Though such questions are of interest and valuable, they lead to a reading of the lives of the saints for which they were not specifically written. Hagiography is not biography in the modern sense of the word. Historicism departs from the narrative, from the story; whereas a hermeneutic of community allows the narrative the opportunity to carry out its appropriate function: to incorporate the saint into the body of the faithful, the body of Christ, whether at the local level or at the level of the universal Church. The integration of the saint into the community strengthens the Christian identity of the community and provides the com-

munity with the opportunity to interpret—to read—the text. It is thus the community that becomes the interpreter. The text, read outside of the community remains simply a text. Within the community of believers, the text provides a verbal icon for the Christian life.

Let me pursue this notion of the verbal icon a bit further. Opponents of eighth-century Iconoclasm argued that icons acted as visual images of the lives of the saints. This line of thinking is found in the debates at the Council of Nicaea (AD 787), where supporters of icons defended images by highlighting the importance of the lives of the saints and how icons were visual depictions of these lives. Without the written image of the saints (that is, the lives of the saints), the Church would be devoid of examples of righteous and pious living. Although it took the Church a few more decades to solidify the presence of icons in its tradition, the icon has now become the universal identification mark of the Orthodox Church. The theological debates of the Iconoclastic period have disappeared, and the icon is accepted on theological grounds as well as for its aesthetic function. It is hard to imagine an Orthodox church without icons. The icon enhances the worship space and one's worship experience by providing a spiritual aesthetic unmatched by any other visual art. Remove icons from the walls and *iconostases* of Orthodox churches and you deprive the faithful of a visual aesthetic that has become synonymous with Orthodox Christianity.

Can we make the same argument for the lives of the saints? If we were to remove all the miraculous, bizarre, un-historical elements from the lives of the saints, would the Orthodox Church lose one of its key aesthetic elements? Certainly stories like those of St Katherine whose body was transported by angels to the top of Mt Sinai, or the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus who hid in a cave outside of Ephesus for almost two-hundred years only to reappear after the

persecution of Christians had ended, lend themselves to doubt. Yet these stories are more than simply cute fables. Like icons, the lives of the saints afford both a decorative aesthetic and serve a deeper spiritual and theological purpose. Within the unbelievable story lies the message to (and from) a community of believers: that God is "wondrous among his saints." The power of God and the power of a life in the Spirit transcend the limits of our visible world. The visual icon as well as the verbal icon reflects both of these notions. On the surface, both icons contribute to the indescribable beauty that is Orthodox Christianity. Through these visual and verbal icons, the believer is able to see a spiritual world that is not limited to the physical laws that transcribe our worldly existence. The aesthetic of the lives of the saints is both verbal and spiritual. Remove them from the pages of the Orthodox Christian tradition and one removes something vital to the overall Orthodox Christian aesthetic.

## CONCLUSION

Orthodox scholars cannot deny the unparalleled contribution that Bollandist scholarship has made to the study of Christianity and to our knowledge of hagiographic literature. The Bollandists and the critical methods they employ ask important questions and produce significant results. Their questions, however, are not the only legitimate questions that can be asked of the lives of the saints. The scholarly and critical approach to the study of the lives of the saints is often at odds with the original literary and religious function and intent of these texts. It is not that early Christians and Byzantines did not ask questions about the historicity of a particular saint. Rather, they asked the question differently. That is, they were not interested in questioning whether or not a saint actually existed, but

rather how to incorporate the saint—real or fictitious in our minds but not theirs—into the community of Christian believers. By telling stories about these Christian heroes and heroines, the numerous known and anonymous authors of the lives of the saints contributed to the creation of an Orthodox aesthetic. The lives of the saints provide their own unique verbal and narrative aesthetic to the life of the Orthodox Church and its faithful. As with the visual icon, it is this community of faithful that can most completely appreciate the lives of the saints.

# THE MEANING AND PLACE OF DEATH IN AN ORTHODOX ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

## Perry T. Hamalis

After concluding a public lecture at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Bishop Kallistos Ware opened the floor for questions from the audience. A listener sitting near the front was called upon first and, in a very matter of fact way, asked the distinguished speaker, "Your Grace, what are your thoughts on the meaning of life?" After the audience's rumbling quieted down, and after an uncomfortably long silence, Bishop Kallistos replied, "Yes, well, in order to understand the meaning of life, one must first understand the meaning of death."[1]

Bishop Kallistos's reply is both provocative and profound. Cutting to the depths of human concern, it demands—and deserves—further consideration. Is it true that the meaning of life and the meaning of death are so intimately connected? If so, what is the meaning of "death" and what does it teach us about the very mean-

[1]The exchange took place after a lecture entitled, "Mission and Evangelism," offered as part of the St John Chrysostom and Orthodox Missions Lecture Series on November 7, 1993.

ing of human existence? While, on the one hand, death is undoubt-edly a great—if not the greatest—mystery that we confront, on the other hand, nearly every one of us has experienced the raw reality of the death of a loved one. Is there anything distinctively "Ortho-dox" about the way we experience this phenomenon that is both mysterious and intimately familiar? What claims do Orthodox thinkers make about human death, and what meaning *should* death have for Orthodox Christians, whether speaking about another's death or our own?

In this essay, I want to shed light upon the meaning and place of death within Orthodox theological and ethical tradition, and, more specifically, within a framework for Orthodox ethics—not as a comprehensive treatment of the subject, but rather as a critical reflection on selected facets. To do so, I make three claims: first, the meaning of human existence and the meaning of death are pro-foundly related within Orthodox thought; second, the predominant frameworks for describing Orthodox ethics often do not refer to death or resurrection directly and, as such, overlook vital resources for ethical reflection; and third, greater purchase on the Church's teachings relating to death, as well as explicit incorporation of death into a framework structured for Orthodox ethical reflection, can ori-ent (or reorient) the lives of Orthodox Christians in important ways.

In order to support these claims, I first clarify my use of the term "ethical framework" and situate the term within present-day Ortho-dox tradition. Next, I draw upon a variety of mainly twentieth-cen-tury Orthodox thinkers to articulate some of the Church's fundamental teachings on the phenomenon of death and introduce some important conceptual distinctions. Against the backdrop of the two preceding sections, I then argue that Orthodoxy accurately reflects an ethical framework that is *thanatomorphic*, literally, "formed by death." I have proposed and developed this term fully

in another study;[2] however, I introduce it in this essay through a brief constructive analysis of Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov's ethical framework. Finally, I suggest a few practical implications of Orthodoxy's thanatomorphic character for the everyday lives of Orthodox Christians.

## ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE MEANING OF LIFE

What is an "ethical framework" and what does it have to do with the meaning of human existence? Simply put, it is "ethical" because it pertains to the way things *ought* to be; it is a "framework" because it structurally defines borders without filling in all substantive details. An ethical framework, then, defines the limits of an image or an account of how human beings ought to live.

A rectangular picture frame illustrates such a structure: it has a bottom, a top, and two sides. To give this four-sided image normative content, one could stipulate that the top of the frame signifies the ultimate aim, purpose, or *telos* of life—the supreme good or goal toward which human beings ought to strive. In contrast, the bottom of the frame could signify the supreme evil—the state of affairs that human beings should seek to avoid. Roughly in the middle of these two borders,[3] one could draw a line joining the frame's two sides,

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[2] See Perry T. Hamalis, "Formed by Death: A Constructive Ethical Study of Death, Fear of Death, and Remembrance of Death in Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov and Thomas Hobbes" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2004).

[3] The claim here that the "given" human condition lies roughly at the midpoint of the frame is meant to suggest only that most ethical visions affirm the possibility for moral progress (moving toward the top) as well as moral regress (moving toward the bottom) from the state of affairs into which human beings are born.

signifying the *given* human condition into which human beings are born. This given, or initial, human condition includes human nature, human capacities, and human potentialities, which may differ from person to person and/or from one historical context to another. Moving up from this initial condition are the various stages of human progress toward the supreme good, and moving down from this initial condition are the various stages of human regression toward the supreme evil. Speaking formally, an ethical framework structures levels to measure the positions of a human being vis-à-vis supreme good and supreme evil.

Ethical frameworks are often religious, but need not be so. One could, for example, construct a Platonic, Epicurean, or Stoic ethical framework. One could also construct a Marxist or a Maoist one. While each of these specific frameworks would differ from each other and—to be sure—from the ethical framework of Orthodox Christianity, they all would conform to the same formal definition. In addition, a single religious, philosophical, or political vision (e.g., Platonism or Orthodox Christianity) might reflect multiple ethical frameworks. Alternative frameworks could be constructed by using different governing symbols or metaphors, each highlighting a different strand or emphasis present within a particular vision's account of the world and of humanity's place within it.

When considering the broad ethical teachings of Orthodox Christianity, at least in a cursory manner, one frequently comes across the term *"theosis,"* often translated as "deification" or "god-likeness." Orthodox Christians frequently identify *theosis* as the ultimate aim toward which human beings should strive, the goal that grounds the very meaning of human existence. For example, ethicist John Breck claims that "the pathway of [Orthodox] Christian morality is nothing other and nothing less than the pathway to deifi-

cation."[4] Similarly, Stanley Harakas writes that "the central theme of Orthodox Christian Ethics . . . concerns itself with . . . real growth in the Image of God, the realization in character, motives, style of life, ethos, and *politeia* toward true humanity, towards [t]heosis."[5] And Christoforos Stavropoulos states simply that "as human beings we each have this one, unique calling, to achieve [t]heosis."[6] With respect to a framework for Orthodox ethics, *theosis* could thus constitute the "top border" that defines the supreme good and that orients human life: the state of affairs made possible by divine grace that Christians should be striving to achieve, in and through their membership in the Church.

Yet, while *theosis* is referred to frequently by Orthodox scholars and non-scholars alike, rarely articulated is a corresponding "bottom border" within such a normative framework. Thus, Georgios Mantzarides is notable when he writes: "[t]he egoistic making of man into god [sic] is the opposite of deification in Christ. While deification in Christ assumes humility and self-offering, this egoistic making of man into god [sic] is founded on self-assurance and conceit."[7] Without engaging the details of Mantzarides's claim, one could say he provides a complementary image—the supreme evil of egoistic self-deification—that helps construct the predominant framework of Orthodox ethics. Summarizing this predominant ethical framework: Orthodox ethics entails striving toward the goal of *theosis* by opening oneself in humility toward divine grace, and striv-

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4John Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life: Orthodox Christianity and Bioethics* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 42.
5Stanley S. Harakas, *Toward Transfigured Life* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life, 1983), 229.
6Archimandrite Christoforos Stavropoulos, *Partakers of Divine Nature*, Stanley S. Harakas, trans. (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life, 1976), 17.
7Georgios Mantzarides, *Orthodox Spiritual Life*, Keith Schram, trans. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 152.

ing to avoid regression toward self-deification by a radical egoism that occludes God's grace.

In addition to such a *"theosis / self-deification"* framework, other ethical frameworks have been articulated to illuminate different dimensions of Orthodox Christianity. For example, some Orthodox authors describe the Christian life as a movement from being born "in the divine image" to being perfected "in the divine likeness."[8] Here the "divine image" refers not to the "bottom border," which usually remains unarticulated, but rather to the "given" human condition that lies roughly at the mid-point between the frame's two extremes. Alternatively, several recent theologians have used the terms "personhood" and "individualism" (correlating to *theosis* and self-deification) to describe, respectively, the top and bottom borders of an Orthodox ethical framework.[9]

A fuller treatment of these diverse Orthodox ethical frameworks lies beyond the scope of this essay, but two immediate observations bear mention. First, Orthodox tradition has resisted allowing a sin-

[8] See, for example, Ware, "In the Image and Likeness: The Uniqueness of the Human Person," in *Personhood: Orthodox Christianity and the Connection between Body, Mind, and Soul,* John T. Chirban, ed. (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1996) and Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God,* John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird, eds. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974).

[9] See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976); Georgios Mantzarides, Χριστιανική ήθική, 4th ed. (Thessaloniki: Pournara, 1995); Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality,* E. Briere, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984) and *Elements of Faith,* Keith Schram, trans. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991); Olivier Clément, *On Being Human: A Spiritual Anthropology,* Jeremy Hummerstone, trans. (New York and London: New City Press, 2000); John Zizioulas, *Being and Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); and Ware, "The Human Person as Icon of the Holy Trinity" *Sobornost* 8.2 (1986): 6–23; and "The Mystery of the Human Person" *Sobornost* 3.1 (1981): 62–69.

gle framework to monopolize its ethical teachings. Multiple frameworks have been articulated and, importantly, the existence of alternative accounts has not been considered problematic. Second, while all of the above-noted frameworks bring out important aspects of life in Orthodoxy, none of them focuses directly and explicitly on the meaning and place of death. Since the Orthodox Church does not insist on a single and comprehensive ethical framework, this absence is not in itself problematic; however, there is something extremely significant to be gained by reflecting directly on the place of death within a normative framework for *everyday life*—indeed, for the development of a framework for life "formed" by death.

## CLAIMS ABOUT DEATH'S NATURE AND MEANING: CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVES

Several twentieth-century scholars in the fields of philosophy and theology have recognized "death" as an important and effective lens for examining religious, philosophical, or ethical teachings. J.S. Dunne contends, for example, that the existential truth of a religious myth can be measured by its power to solve "the problem of death."[10] Similarly, George Santayana states that "a good way of testing the caliber of a philosophy is to ask what it thinks of death."[11] Jaroslav Pelikan, after repeating Santayana's above claim and extending its scope to testing the caliber of theologies, argues that the Christian tradition "whose central message is the biography of

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[10]J.S. Dunne, *The City of the Gods: A Study in Myth and Morality* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), v.

[11]Cited in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Shape of Death* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1961), 5.

a crucified Jew cannot avoid speaking about death, whether it be his death or ours."[12] Similarly, Albert Camus claims that the subject of death is "the only truly serious philosophical problem," and that "judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy."[13] The Russian Orthodox philosopher-theologian Nicholas Berdyaev goes so far as to assert that "[s]trictly speaking, a system of ethics which does not make death its central problem has no value and is lacking in depth and earnestness."[14] All of these thinkers share the conviction that, while not the only relevant theme for structuring normative reflection, death is an unquestionably salient and profound aspect of any rigorous, systematic effort to build an ethical framework by which to order human existence.

Orthodox tradition does not present a refined and univocal teaching on the nature of human death. Representatives of the tradition have emphasized different dimensions of this fundamental phenomenon, and the Church has not insisted on a single account or an official doctrine pertaining to it. In fact, much more doctrine has been officially pronounced regarding Christ's death than about human mortality in general.[15] Nonetheless, certain shared claims are broadly confirmed and, taken together, constitute the components of an Orthodox Christian view on the subject. Many of these

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[12]Pelikan, *The Shape of Death*, 5.

[13]Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, Justin O'Brien, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 3.

[14]Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, Natalie Duddington, trans. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937), 263.

[15]The sixth-century "theopaschite" controversy, for example, provided the occasion for systematic reflection on the relationship between Christ's death on the cross and his identity as the incarnate Logos. See the discussion in John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 69–89.

claims are based upon biblical passages, early creedal statements, or patristic sources. They reappear frequently in the Church's prayers and hymnology and thus have become entrenched beliefs through repetition within the context of liturgy.[16] As a result, while some non-Orthodox may regard both the content and the language used to express these teachings as metaphysically naïve or outdated, they constitute symbols of the Orthodox faith very much alive today.

Despite some significant differences in their theological anthropologies, contemporary Orthodox thinkers universally reject a "physicalist" vision of death: the view that human existence ceases with the death of the physical body.[17] Stated positively, authoritative representatives of the Orthodox tradition affirm three interrelated claims without exception. First, they affirm that *the human being is a unified reality with both physical and spiritual (non-physical) dimensions*. Some Orthodox thinkers underscore this unity but differentiate between two dimensions by using the dualist language of "body" and "soul"; others affirm an integrated unity but distinguish "body," "soul," and "spirit" by using a "tripartite" schema; and still others use the terms "person" and "nature," wherein nature includes both body and soul.[18] Second, they affirm that *real or non-metaphorical*

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[16]Stephen Bigham has shown how several dimensions of the Eastern Orthodox view of human death are visually proclaimed in Byzantine iconography. See his "Death and Orthodox Iconography" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29.4 (1985): 325–41.

[17]For further discussions of the problems with a physicalist understanding of death's nature from an Orthodox perspective see Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, Boris Jakim, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 349ff and Alexander Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?* Alexis Vinogradov, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 22–24 and 94–98.

[18]For example, Dumitru Staniloae teaches, "According to the Christian faith, man consists of a material body and of what we call the soul, which cannot be reduced to matter. The soul permeates the material body and is bound up with it, yet transcends its materiality." in *The Experience of God: Orthodox*

*death pertains to both the physical and the spiritual dimensions.* As John Meyendorff writes, "The spiritual literature of the Byzantine East frequently speaks of the 'death of the soul' as a consequence of rebellion against God, i.e., of sin."[19] Put differently, both physical

*Dogmatic Theology Vol. 2, The World: Creation and Deification*, trans. and ed., Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 65. Similarly, John Meyendorff writes, "The Fathers [of the Eastern Church] unanimously affirmed that man is a unity of soul and body." in *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 140. Ware writes, "We are each of us, not a soul temporarily imprisoned in a body and longing to escape, but an integrated totality that embraces soul and body together." in *The Inner Kingdom, Volume I of the Collected Works* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000), 30. And Georges Florovsky teaches, "It is not the body that dies, but the whole man. For man is organically composed of body and soul. Neither soul nor body separately represents man. A body without a soul is but a corpse, and a soul without a body is a ghost. . . . That is why the separation of soul and body is the death of the man himself." in *Creation and Redemption: Collected Works Vol. 3* (Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1976), 106–7). Regarding the tripartite scheme, Meyendorff writes, "A majority of Byzantine theologians describe man in terms of a trichotomist scheme: spirit (or mind), soul, and body." in *Byzantine Theology*, 141. Sergius Bulgakov uses the tripartite scheme, "body-soul-spirit," but also relates it to a robust understanding of "hypostasis," in *The Bride of the Lamb*, 83–123 and passim. And Yannaras exemplifies the emphasis on "person/hypostasis-nature" language, as can be seen in the following passage:

> Both the body and the soul are energies of human nature, that is, the modes by which the events of the hypostasis (or personality, the ego, the identity of the subject) is given effect. What each specific man *is*, his real existence or his hypostasis, this inmost *I* which constitutes him as an existential event, is identified neither with the body nor with the soul. The soul and the body only reveal and disclose what man *is*; they form energies, manifestations, expressions, functions to reveal the hypostasis of man. (*Elements of Faith*, 63)

For present purposes, the anthropological specifics are less important than the general contention that human beings are unified realities including both physical and non-physical dimensions.

[19]Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 141. Similarly, Metropolitan Anthony

death and spiritual death must be considered when addressing the place and meaning of death within an Orthodox Christian ethical vision. Third, Orthodox voices affirm that *in a real and personal sense, a spiritual dimension of the human being* (i.e., "soul," "spirit," or "person/hypostasis") *exists after physical death.* There is no doubting after-death existence within Orthodoxy; after bodily death, human beings continue to exist with a personal identity in a non-physical form.[20] Affirmation of post-mortem existence further implies that the term "spiritual death" does not denote the annihilation of the spiritual or non-physical dimension. Something—or, better, *someone*—survives in the post-mortem condition, even if *spiritually dead.*[21] Instead of non-existence, spiritual death indicates radical separation, rupture, or alienation from God, regarded within Orthodoxy as *real* death. In sum, many Orthodox authors make strong claims about the interrelationship and interdependence of human

Bloom writes, "We should keep in mind that there are two aspects of death. There is physical death, but there is also death understood as separation from God, as descent into Sheol, the place where God is not, the place of his radical and definite absence." ("On Death" *Sobornost* 1.2 [1979]: 13).

[20]Yannaras, who sharply criticizes popular conceptions of the "soul," still defends "the Church's faith in 'life after death,'" basing his conviction not on the view that "the soul is immortal" or "the spirit survives" in some independent way, but rather on the belief that God's love continues to constitute one's personal identity (*hypostasis*) regardless of whether one's psychosomatic capacities are functioning. See his *Elements of Faith,* 65. Vlahos lays out his teaching on all three of these points through an interpretation of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.19–31). See his *Life after Death,* Esther Williams, trans. (Levadia, Greece: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1995), 21–33. See also Philip Sherrard, *Christianity: Lineaments of a Sacred Tradition* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 183–84.

[21]On this point Florovsky writes, "['Spiritual Death'] of a person is only in the estrangement from God, but even in this case it does not mean annihilation. . . . The notion of an immortal soul may be a Platonic accretion, but the notion of an 'indestructible person' is an integral part of the Gospel" (*Creation and Redemption,* 259).

physical and non-physical dimensions, and agree that both of these dimensions are capable of real death, concurring that a spiritual dimension continues to exist following the death of the body.[22]

Rejection of the physicalist vision of death is supported by the ongoing Eastern Christian liturgical practice of praying both *for* and *to* the dead.[23] Kallistos Ware writes, "Prayer for the dead is not seen by Orthodox Christians as an optional extra, but it is an accepted and unvarying feature in all our daily worship."[24] This practice, as Ware also notes, carries a different meaning than it did in the medieval Western Church but nonetheless underscores a shared basic conviction: the existence of the physically dead has not been annihilated. Likewise, in the Orthodox practice of praying *to* the saints in the daily worship services,[25] the saints are not merely

[22]There is, here, basic agreement between the present day Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox churches, as demonstrated by the following official pronouncement from the Vatican, "a spiritual element [of the human being] survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human self' subsists," although lacking the complement of its body (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter on Certain Questions Concerning Eschatology*, 17 May 1979: *AAS* 71 [1979]: 941).

[23]See the extended analysis in Paul J. Fedwick, "Death and Dying in Byzantine Liturgical Traditions" *Eastern Christian Review* 8.2 (1976): 152–61. See also the discussion of the Orthodox funeral and memorial services in Nicholaos P. Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, Peter A. Chamberas, trans. (Athens: The Orthodox Brotherhood of Theologians "The Savior," 1993), 352–77 and 417–39. For a discussion of both praying "for" and praying "to" the dead, see Timothy Ware, "The Communion of Saints" in A.J. Philippou, ed., *The Orthodox Ethos* (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1964), 140–49.

[24]Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 34. Ware further explains the practice as follows, "We pray for [the dead], and at the same time we are confident they are praying for us; and it is through this mutual intercession that we and they are joined, across the boundary of death, in a firm and unbroken bond of unity" (ibid., 33–34). See also his essay, "One Body in Christ: Death and the Communion of Saints" *Sobornost* 3.2 (1981): 179–91.

[25]Florovsky emphasizes the importance of "the ancient doctrine of the

remembered for their exemplary lives but rather are addressed personally; intercessory prayers are requested of them—highlighting the rejection of a physicalist view of human death.

Regarding specific conditions of after-life existence and eschatology, Orthodox thinkers are generally reticent;[26] yet, two basic shared teachings can be singled out. First, they widely hold that immediately following a human being's physical death, his or her surviving spiritual dimension experiences a foretaste of either heaven or hell. (These theological symbols, heaven and hell, are not crudely understood as spatial destinations but rather refer to the experience of God's presence according to two different modes.)[27] Furthermore, the experience of this foretaste is based upon an ethical criterion: one's way of life and relationship with God before death.[28] Still, while claiming human beings survive death in their

Communion of Saints" for understanding death and eschatology more broadly. See his *Creation and Redemption*, 259.

[26]Florovsky, for example, states that "the Last Judgment is an awful mystery, which cannot, and should not, be rationalized, which passes all knowledge and understanding. Yet it is a mystery of our own existence, which we cannot escape, even if we fail to comprehend or understand it intellectually" (*Creation and Redemption*, 257).

[27]Cf. Vlahos, *Life after Death*, 89–90.

[28]For example, Philip Sherrard writes, "How we are in our immediate post-mortal state, and which direction our life takes then, will depend on what direction we have given it here. . . . The judgment we have in this phase is, in this respect, a self-judgment: we are condemned or delivered according to what we have allowed to become our ruling disposition, or our ruling love. . . . In this sense it is true that we make our own hell and our own heaven. If at the hour of our physical death we are still caught up in the world of lies and falsities and evil—still enslaved to that bundle of illusions and deceits which St Paul describes as 'the body of this death' (Rom 7:24)—we are in hell. To the degree to which we have freed ourselves, or resurrected ourselves, from the body of this death we receive the blessings of heaven" (*Christianity*, 189–90). See also Ware, "One Body in Christ," 182–83 and Vigen Guroian, *Life's Living Toward Dying: A Theological and Medical-Ethical Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 48–49.

spiritual dimension and undergo an initial judgment, Orthodox representatives of the tradition tend to avoid robust accounts of the afterlife.

A second shared eschatological teaching is that at the second coming of Christ, the dead will receive resurrected bodies and experience a final judgment. The centerpiece of this teaching, a real bodily resurrection—a scandal to the rational mind and dismissed even among many present-day Christians—is staunchly defended by the Orthodox Church.[29] Kallistos Ware writes, "We look beyond the separation of body and soul at death to their future reintegration at the final resurrection. . . . as we confess in the Creed, 'we are expecting the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.' "[30] Although corresponding substantive accounts demonstrate a great deal of reserve, they unequivocally affirm bodily resurrection as an eschatological reality that is, on the one hand, truly physical but, on the other, radically new.[31] The universally shared affirmation that a spiritual dimension of the human being continues after physical death is, therefore, complemented by an insistence that such a state alone is insufficient, incomplete, or imperfect. For the human being to reach his or her proper *telos*, the physical and the non-physical dimensions must be reunited—albeit in a new way—through a real bodily resurrection.[32]

[29]Schmemann reflects both the scandalous and the crucial character of bodily resurrection when he writes, "I am convinced that even now, 2,000 years after the founding of Christianity, it is difficult, if not impossible, for humanity to understand this preaching [of bodily resurrection], to understand why Christianity itself stands or falls precisely on this preaching." in *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 40.

[30]Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 32.

[31]For limited discussions of the nature of the "resurrected body" see Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 37–41; Guroian, *Life's Living Toward Dying*, 51ff.; and Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 41–43.

[32]For example, Nicolas Vassiliades writes, "The resurrection of the body

To ground their teachings on the cause and nature of human death, i.e., etiological claims, contemporary Orthodox thinkers generally look to the account of the fall in Genesis 3, Pauline and other scriptural sources, and various patristic interpretations of them. Here, two foundational teachings pertaining to death's source, or origin, should be addressed.

First, Orthodox thinkers broadly hold that *human death is not from God*; in this regard, they frequently cite the deutero-canonical text, "God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living" (Wis 1.13).[33] Kallistos Ware exemplifies the predominant view when he states, "Death is not part of God's primary purpose for His creation. He created us, not in order that we should die, but in order that we should live."[34] To suggest that death originates from God, according to this line of argument, reveals ignorance of God's character: God is the source of life, not of death—the Creator, not the Destroyer.[35]

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will take place because in the life beyond the grave the whole man must live; the soul along with the body. The psychosomatic unity which was broken with death must be reestablished." in "The Mystery of Death" *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 29.3 (1984): 278. See also, Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 259–60. Author's note: Throughout the footnotes, two entries may easily be confused: Nicolas Vassiliades, author of "The Mystery of Death," and Nicholaos P. Vassiliadis, author of *The Mystery of Death*; this is the same author, however his name has been transliterated differently from Greek to English in his publications.

[33] See, for example, Boris Bobrinskoy, "Old Age and Death: Tragedy or Blessing?" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 28.4 (1984): 237; Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, John and Michael Breck, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 18; Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 31; Vlahos, *Life after Death*, 41–42.

[34] Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 30.

[35] Schmemann writes, "God created life. Always and everywhere God is himself called the Life and the giver of Life." in *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 31.

Although denying death a divine origin may preserve God's character as the source and creator of life, theological difficulties ensue when taking this approach. For example, to say that human death is not from God implies a tremendous power in the world that has an extra-divine origin[36]—creating no small difficulty for a traditional Christian understanding of the Divine and risking a compromise of the core claim of *one* God who is "Creator of . . . *all* things visible and invisible."[37] Moreover, to affirm that God "does not delight in the death of the living" (cf. Wis 1.13) suggests that an extra-divine power pursues a contra-divine purpose; it implies that the immense force of mortality within the world is unnatural—against the Divine order of creation.[38] While protecting God's character as "Life-giver," this approach puts in question God's omnipotence as "Father Almighty."[39] Following the patristic tradition, several contemporary Orthodox authors acknowledge these difficulties but do not see them as being theologically insurmountable. For example, Jean-Claude Larchet writes, "Although he is the 'Creator of all things visible and invisible,' God cannot be considered to be the author of illness, suffering, and death. The Fathers affirm this unanimously."[40] Larchet

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[36] Cf. Schmemann, *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 31.

[37] Each of these descriptions of God is taken from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which remains the normative "Symbol of Faith" for the Orthodox Church.

[38] For example, Florovsky writes, "[Death] was not divinely instituted. Human death did not belong to the Divine order of creation. It was not normal or natural for man to die. It was an abnormal estrangement from God, who is man's Maker and Master." in *Creation and Redemption*, 11.

[39] The identification of God as "Father Almighty (Πατέρα παντοκράτορα)" is also taken from the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which is recited in the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church.

[40] Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, 17. Larchet goes on to cite multiple passages from SS Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus the Confessor.

and (to the best of my understanding) most other recent Orthodox thinkers respond to these theological difficulties by appeals to a traditional understanding of the fall and a corresponding understanding of Christ's death and resurrection, a soteriological perspective.

This brings us to the second foundational Orthodox teaching on the etiology of death: death is not from God but from humanity. Death came into the world through sin and has been passed on to all (cf. Rom 5–6).[41] Through Adam's desire to have life in himself, independently, a break in communion, or rupture, with God occurred. "Ancestral sin" resulted in immediate spiritual death and ushered mortality (i.e., physical death) into human nature.[42] Human beings were created neither mortal by nature nor immortal by nature but rather with a capacity for both ways of being.[43] They were created in communion with God, given the gift of freedom, and endowed with the capacity and longing for life.[44] Had this communion been freely preserved, human beings would have lived eter-

[41]Florovsky states simply, "Death comes from sin, from the original fall.... Man's mortality is the stigma or "the wages" of sin (Rom 6:23)." in *Creation and Redemption*, 11–12. See also Breck, *The Sacred Gift of Life*, 30; Guroian, *Life's Living toward Dying*, 42–45; Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 32–36; N. Vassiliades, "The Mystery of Death," 272–73; and Vlahos, *Life after Death*, 41.

[42]Vlahos states that, after "eating of the tree" (in accordance with Gen 2.17), "death did enter human nature—first spiritual death, which is man's separation from God, and then bodily death, which is the soul's separation from the body at the appropriate time. On the day when Adam sinned he died spiritually, and more slowly he died physically as well." in *Life after Death*, 42. Vlahos supports his claims with references to SS Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and others. See ibid., 44. See also Stephen Bigham, "Death and Orthodox Iconography" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29.4 (1985): 326; Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 104.

[43]See the superb discussion of Patristic sources on this issue in Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, 20–26. See also Pelikan, *The Shape of Death*, 104–6.

[44]Cf. Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, 20–21 and Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 77.

nally—not on account of natural necessity but because of their proper relationship with the Trinity. Since this originally intended life-giving communal condition was not freely preserved by Adam and Eve, both spiritual death and physical death entered the realm of human existence and became the contra-natural fallen condition.[45] Not divine impotence, but rather God's profound respect for human freedom, provides the predominant rationale, among Orthodox voices, for such a tremendously powerful, extra-divine and contra-divine phenomenon.[46]

Not surprisingly, therefore, many Orthodox thinkers regard not only spiritual death but also the condition of physical mortality in a strongly negative light, understanding it as a contra-divine phenomenon, and describing it as "a deep tragedy," a "painful metaphysical catastrophe," a "mysterious failure of human destiny."[47] Death is "foreign," "unnatural," "fearsome," and "perverted."[48] It is "profoundly abnormal" and even "monstrous," reflecting a world that is "distorted and out of joint, crazy, écrasé."[49] Additionally, death is "pointedly incompatible with love" and "strikes at the image of the triune God within us when it takes from us those

[45]Larchet cites the following passage from St Gregory Palamas, "God created neither the death of the soul nor the death of the body." [One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, 51] in The Theology of Illness, 18. Similarly, Vlahos teaches, "[death] was not natural to man at first but was introduced into human nature and therefore acts as a parasite." in Life after Death, 41.

[46]Florovsky writes, "Many things are happening which God abhors—in the world which is His work and His subject. Strangely enough, God respects human freedom, as St Irenaeus once said, although, in fact, the most conspicuous manifestation of this freedom was revolt and disorder." in Creation and Redemption, 264. Cf. ibid., 15–16. See also Larchet, The Theology of Illness, 23–24.

[47]Florovsky, Creation and Redemption, 105. Cf. ibid., 11–12 and 111.
[48]Schmemann, O Death Where is Thy Sting?, 30.
[49]Ware, The Inner Kingdom, 30.

whom we love."[50] These sharply negative assessments of physical death were confirmed by Christ himself when he wept for his friend Lazarus and agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane.[51] Death, in short, is "the enemy, God's as much as ours."[52]

But several traditional voices also claim that, while God did not cause death, God permitted death but turned this negative phenomenon into a positive one. We have already noted that God created human beings with the freedom to sin and, in this sense, provided for the possibility of both spiritual and physical death. However, several Orthodox authors further claim that, in *allowing* for physical death, God's love and mercy were expressed. "God permitted death," writes Hierotheos Vlahos, "in order that man should not remain forever in a living death."[53] Similarly, Kallistos Ware states, "For us humans to live unendingly in this fallen world, caught forever in the vicious cycle of boredom and sin, would have been a fate too terrible for us to endure; and so God has supplied us with a way of escape [through physical death]."[54] By permitting physical death, God set a limit on the sufferings of life in a fallen world.[55] He pro-

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[50]Guroian, *Life's Living Toward Dying*, 33–34.

[51]Bobrinskoy, for instance, puts it: "Before the tomb of Lazarus Jesus experiences a sadness that is by no means feigned. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he knows agony and the sweat of blood. This is no pretense. Christ never preaches acceptance of death. He Himself passes through the throes of death and the portals of hell. For He is resurrection and life." in "Old Age and Death," 241. See also the discussion of Christ's tears for Lazarus in Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 30, and Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 24–25, 30, and 76.

[52]Bloom, "On Death," 13.

[53]Vlahos, *Life after Death*, 46. Vlahos is here citing St Basil the Great's homily "That God is not the Cause of Evils" (PG 31, 345AB).

[54]Ware, *The Inner Kingdom*, 31. Cf. Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, Liadain Sherrard, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 25.

[55]Bobrinskoy links the "blessing" of death with the cessation of illness and of the sufferings of old age. See his "Old Age and Death," 243.

vided a way out of "the vicious circle of endlessness" and a way into "eternity."[56] This contrasting characterization of death protects God's omnipotence, even as it leads to an antinomy: death appears as both negative *and* positive, enemy *and* friend, tragedy *and* blessing. Berdyaev summarizes the antinomy: "[D]eath is the result of sin and the last enemy, the supreme evil which must be conquered. And at the same time, in our sinful world, death is a blessing and a value."[57] The crucial phrase here, "in our sinful world" strictly grounds the "positive," "blessing," and "friend" side of the antinomian character of death upon the fallen condition of creation. Within Orthodoxy, death is never good in itself; whatever value death carries stems from the brokenness in the world, which first ushered in death.

Most important, Jesus Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection underlie the totality of Orthodox Christian thought, including contemporary teachings on death. In this respect, all of the points I have raised—the rejection of the physicalist vision of death, eschatological claims about the afterlife and bodily resurrection, and teachings on the origin and character of human death—are informed by the Christ-event in a basic way. Christ's full humanity, real physical death on the cross, and bodily resurrection and ascension have "changed the shape of death"[58] and deepened both sides of its antinomy.[59] On the one hand, the Christ-event highlights the

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[56]Bloom, "On Death," 13. Berdyaev makes a similar claim, "Death—the supreme horror and evil—proves to be the only way out of the 'bad time' into eternity." in *The Destiny of Man*, 249. See also the discussion in N. Vassiliades, "The Mystery of Death," 273.

[57]Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, 249–50.

[58]This phrase is taken from Pelikan, *The Shape of Death*, 123.

[59]For an overview of how Christ's "incarnation," "death," "resurrection," and "ascension" each contributes to humanity's salvation, see Staniloae, "The Orthodox Doctrine of Salvation," 187–202.

catastrophic nature of death and, on the other, it transforms death into a glorious passage to eternal life.[60]

For the Orthodox Church, the salvation that God offered through Jesus Christ is, first and foremost, victory over death. The Easter proclamation summarizes this core soteriological teaching: "*Christ is risen from the dead! And death by his death is trampled. And to those in the tombs he is granting life.*"[61] Since the incarnate Son of God effected humanity's reconciliation and redemption, salvation from death certainly encompasses spiritual death, the condition of alienation from God.[62] However, Christ also trampled upon physi-

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[60] For example, Berdyaev writes, "The Son of God, the Redeemer and Savior, absolutely sinless and holy, had to accept death, and thereby He sanctified death. Hence the double attitude of Christianity to death. Christ has destroyed death by His death. His voluntary death . . . is a blessing and supreme value. . . . Through the cross death is transfigured and leads us to resurrection and to life. The whole of this world must be made to pass through death and crucifixion, else it cannot attain resurrection and eternity." in *The Destiny of Man*, 252. See also, Guroian, "Learning How to Die Well: Lessons from the Ancient Church," in *Ancient and Postmodern Christianity: Paleo-Orthodoxy in the 21st Century*, Kenneth Tanner and Christopher Hall, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 72, and Schmemann, *O Death Where Is Thy Sting?*, 99–100.

[61] Apolytikion from the service of Pascha.

[62] Dumitru Staniloae makes an important point in regard to the terminology of reconciliation, redemption, and salvation. He notes that the Orthodox Church has generally preferred to use the term salvation over either reconciliation or redemption, which have been preferred, respectively, by Protestants and Roman Catholics. Staniloae argues that all three term are biblical and theologically sound but that salvation has been preferred by the Orthodox because it is more encompassing. He writes, "[salvation] expresses the deepest, most comprehensive and many-sided meaning of the work which Jesus Christ accomplished. In this last dimension, that is to say, understood as the destruction of man's death in all its forms and the assurance of full and eternal life, the word "salvation" produces in the Orthodox faithful a feeling of absolute gratitude towards Christ to whom they owe the deliverance of their existence

cal death. "The death of our Lord," Florovsky writes, "was the victory over death and *mortality*, not just the remission of sins, nor merely a justification of man, nor again a satisfaction of an abstract justice."[63] Over and over, the Orthodox Church proclaims Christ's conquering of death and granting of life. Over and over, the martyrs, ascetics, and other saints of the Church are described as enjoying a foretaste of God's kingdom. Over and over, the promise of the resurrection is held up as the core of the gospel.[64]

Nevertheless, Orthodox authors, in describing the ultimate meaning and purpose of human existence—Orthodoxy's "ethical framework"—frequently today restrict their language to "*theosis*," to "growth from image to likeness," or to "striving toward personhood." Rarely do we find contemporary voices from within the

and the prospect of eternal life and happiness." in "The Orthodox Doctrine of Salvation and Its Implications for Christian Diakonia in the World" in *Theology and the Church*, Robert Barringer, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 182.

[63]Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*, 104, italics added. Cf. ibid., 110. Vladimir Lossky cites Athanasius to make the same point, " 'Christ,' [Athanasius] says, 'having delivered the temple of His body to death offered one sacrifice for all men to make them innocent and free from original [sin], and also to show Himself victorious over death and to create the first fruits of the General Resurrection with His own incorruptible body.' Here the juridical image of the Redemption is completed by another image, the physical—or rather biological—image of the triumph of life over death, of incorruptibility triumphing in the nature which has been corrupted by sin." in "Redemption and Deification" in *In the Image and Likeness* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 99–100. See also Schmemann, *O Death Where is Thy Sting?*, 53–60, 81–84, 99–100 and N. Vassiliades, "The Mystery of Death," 269, 275–78.

[64]Meyendorff puts it this way, "Communion in the risen body of Christ; participation in divine life; sanctification through the energy of God, which penetrates true humanity and restores it to its "natural" state, rather than justification, or remission of inherited guilt—these are at the center of [the] Byzantine understanding of the Christian Gospel." in *Byzantine Theology*, 146.

Orthodox tradition framing the ethical life with language that constitutes the very core of the gospel: the language of *death* and *resurrection*. In light of death's nature and meaning within Orthodox theology, their tendency is puzzling, if not seriously problematic. The Christ-event and the Church's theology of death reflect the acute need for an articulation of Orthodoxy's ethical teachings through a framework that is thanatomorphic—literally, "formed by death."

## THE *THANATOMORPHIC* CHARACTER OF ORTHODOX ETHICS AND THE EXAMPLE OF FR SOPHRONY

The thanatomorphic concept derives from two Greek words, θάνατος ("death") and μορφόω ("to form/shape"), and pertains to "ethical frameworks" formed, or structured, by the phenomenon of physical and/or spiritual death in three accounts: the given condition, the supreme good or purpose, and the supreme evil of human existence. While much more could be said about the general meaning and utility of the thanatomorphic concept,[65] the heart of the matter is this: *Orthodox Christianity can be described accurately and illuminatively as reflecting an ethical framework that is thanatomorphic.*

While convinced that this claim applies to Orthodoxy's historical tradition broadly, I am limited in the context of this article to present only one recent outstanding voice of Orthodoxy whose writings reflect explicitly the thanatomorphic character of the faith—a voice that serves as an excellent example of the potential fecundity of framing Orthodoxy's ethical vision by using the language of

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[65]See, again, the detailed discussion in Hamalis, "Formed by Death."

death and resurrection. In a central teaching repeated with slight changes in several of his works,[66] Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov)[67] articulates this normative claim:

> Our one and only war ... is the sacred battle with the common enemy of all people, of all mankind—against death [cf. 1 Cor 15.26]. In effect man has no other enemy. Our fight is for resurrection—our own and each of our fellow men's.[68]

[66]Similar passages include the following: "All of us have a single enemy—our mortality. If man is mortal, if there is no resurrection, then the whole of world history is nothing but senseless creature suffering." from Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, *On Prayer*, Rosemary Edmonds, trans. (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1996), 66. Again, "Our fight is with the common enemy—death. Battling for our personal resurrection, we at the same time wrestle for the universal rising again of all who have lived in the world since the beginning of time" (Ibid., 83). Similarly, "We are faced with a mighty battle but an especially holy battle, not like the fratricidal wars that crowd the history of our world ever since Cain killed his brother Abel. Our common and only real enemy is our mortality. We must grapple painfully with the death that pervades all things, first and foremost ourselves" (Ibid., 117). Consider also, "This unique war in which we are engaged is indeed a holy war. We wrestle with the last and only enemy of mankind—death (1 Cor 15.26). Our fight is for universal resurrection." from Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, *His Life is Mine*, Rosemary Edmonds, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977), 68.

[67]Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov (b. 1896) served as the spiritual father of the St John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, England until his repose in 1993. Prior to this, he lived for more than twenty years on Mount Athos in the Russian monastery of St Panteleimon, and for seven years as a hermit in the Athonite wilderness. For a fuller account of his life see Nicholas V. Sakharov, *I Love therefore I Am: The Theological Legacy of Archimandrite Sophrony* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 13–37 and M. Basil Pennington's "Archimandrite Sophrony: Disciple of Father Silouan" in *In Search of True Wisdom: Visits to Eastern Spiritual Fathers*, S. Bolshakoff and M. B. Pennington, eds. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979), 137–144.

[68]Archimandrite Sophrony Sakharov, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, Rosemary

From this rich passage, we can glean several overlapping dimensions of Fr Sophrony's ethical teachings: on the one hand, those expressing the thanatomorphic character of his vision's framework; on the other, those providing a deeper understanding of the place and meaning of death within Orthodox Christianity. First, Fr Sophrony's description of death is sharply and uncompromisingly negative. The positive side of the antinomy we noted in some Orthodox thinkers' descriptions of death is absent here. Drawing from St Paul (cf. 1 Cor 15.26), Fr Sophrony depicts death as the *enemy*. Death is not a friend to be embraced; it is not an inevitability with which we ought to harmonize our purposes; it is not a welcomed liberation either from the body or from finite subjectivity. Death is rather the "common enemy of all people," the unequivocal enemy of "all mankind." And, for Fr Sophrony, death is the enemy because human beings are created for life—for meaningful and eternal life.[69]

Second, according to Fr Sophrony death is not only the *enemy*, it is *the* enemy. To repeat, "Our *one and only* war" is against death and, "In effect, [the human being] has *no other enemy*." Similarly, he writes elsewhere: "Our common and *only real enemy* is our mortality."[70] In these striking passages, Fr Sophrony boldly contends that neither "sin" nor "injustice" nor even "evil" is humanity's principle enemy, but all derive from the most basic problem of death. The human predicament is, first and foremost, an *ontological* predica-

Edmonds, trans. (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1988), 99.

[69] Cf. Archimandrite Sophrony, *His Life is Mine*, 33. Fr Sophrony's contention that human beings are created for meaningful and eternal life is grounded in his sophisticated account of the human being as *persona-hypostasis*. For a detailed discussion of the subject see N. Sakharov, *I Love therefore I Am*, 69–92.

[70] Archimandrite Sophrony, *His Life is Mine*, 68. Italics added. Cf. Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 66.

ment—a problem related to human existence itself— reflected by the threat of both physical and spiritual death.

Within Fr Sophrony's ethical vision, mortality, the possibility of physical death, defines the given human condition—it characterizes the mid-point line between the bottom and top of his frame. This mortal condition not only contradicts human beings' fundamental desire for eternal existence, but also profoundly affects the way we live. According to Fr Sophrony, physical death and, especially, the accompanying *fear* of physical death corrupts human agency and fuels our willful tendency for selfishness, individualism, and sin. In a telling passage he writes, "Until man attains his resurrection in Christ everything in him is disfigured by fear of death and consequently by servitude to sin, also."[71] Fr Sophrony here suggests that the tragedy of physical death fuels the further tragedy of sinful action; the condition of mortality lies at the core of humanity's ethical predicament because fear of physical death is a basis for enslavement to sin. Fr Sophrony cites a passage from the Letter to the Hebrews (2.14–15) to support his view of the fall,[72] which comports with several other voices within the Orthodox tradition. For example John Romanides states:

The power of [physical] death in the universe has brought with it the will for self-preservation, fear, and anxiety, which in turn are the root causes of self-assertion, egoism, hatred, envy and the like . . . Man does not die because he is guilty for the sin of

[71] Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, Rosemary Edmonds, trans. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 107.

[72] Fr Sophrony: "*Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, [Christ] himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage*" (Heb 2.14–15). Fr Sophrony cites this passage in *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 117.

Adam. He becomes a sinner because he is yoked to the power of the devil through death and its consequences.[73]

For Romanides, Fr Sophrony, and other recent Orthodox thinkers,[74] the two primary consequences of the fall are death and the fear of death; the disaster of sin in the world stems from the principal catastrophe of mortality. However, it would be wrong to think that sinful action did not profoundly concern Fr Sophrony. Within his writings, we see that sin itself ontologically effectuates the even more serious condition of spiritual death. He writes: "Those who fall away from God [through sin] suffer spiritual death and depart into 'outer darkness.' "[75] For Fr Sophrony, death is not only the *enemy* but also *the* enemy because, by promoting sin and separating us from God, spiritual and physical death constitute both the ethical and the ontological root of the human predicament.

A third point in Fr Sophrony's opening quotation is his clear use of the term "resurrection" to express the ultimate purpose of human life: "Our fight is for resurrection." Elsewhere, he uses the term similarly: "Our attention should be focused on our resurrection in God as the ultimate meaning of our appearance in this world."[76] In both

[73]John Romanides, "Original Sin According to St Paul" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 4 (1955/6): 20–21. Romanides authored the seminal work comparing Eastern and Western theologies of the fall. See his, *The Ancestral Sin*, George S. Gabriel, trans. (Ridgewood, NJ: Zephyr, 2002).

[74]John Meyendorff is another example of a recent voice within Orthodoxy that has emphasized this interpretation of the fall, underscoring the significance of physical death and the accompanying fear of physical death as the impetus for sinful action. See Meyendorff, "Anthropology and Original Sin," in *John XXIII Lectures*, vol. I (1996), and *Byzantine Theology*, 138–150. See also the study by Bobrinskoy, "The Adamic Heritage According to John Meyendorff," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42.1 (1998): 33–44.

[75]Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan*, 147.

[76]Archimandrite Sophrony, *His Life is Mine*, 109. See also his *Saint Silouan*,

these passages, resurrection identifies the normative human condition—the supreme good constituting the way things *ought* to be for human beings and defining the meaning of human life. Fr Sophrony goes so far as to say, "[i]f there is no resurrection, then the whole of world history is nothing but senseless creature suffering."[77] Clearly, the resurrection describes the top of the frame that structures Fr Sophrony's ethical vision. By top-framing his vision with the language of resurrection Fr Sophrony reiterates his conviction that the supreme evil—the frame's bottom—represents eternal separation and alienation from God, a condition of everlasting physical as well as spiritual death. So, the ultimate evil together with the ultimate good work upward and downward within the ethical framework to form and shape the substance of Fr Sophrony's thanatomorphic vision—the "picture" of Orthodox Christian life that lies within his frame.

Helpful to consider briefly is what Fr Sophrony has in mind when stating: "Our fight is for resurrection—our own and each of our fellow men's." What condition does he imply in "attaining" or "living" the resurrection?

By "resurrection" Fr Sophrony firstly means eternal life after death, for he contends that nothing less can fulfill the human soul's deepest longing or constitute genuine salvation.[78] Death is the *enemy* because it violates the human identity as a creature made in God's image, made for eternal existence.[79] In addition, Fr Sophrony affirms the biblical promise that the resurrected life will be an

107 and *On Prayer*, 135.

[77] Archimandrite Sophrony, *On Prayer*, 66.

[78] We noted earlier that this conviction stems from his understanding of the human being as *persona-hypostasis*, as created in the divine image (cf. Gen 1.26).

[79] Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 53, 84–85, 104. See also *His Life is Mine*, 120.

embodied life, although he refrains from making specific claims about the nature of resurrected bodies, other than those present in the New Testament record.[80] Thus, the resurrected life satisfies the fundamental human yearning: it removes death's finality, adding a new chapter after the tragic dénouement of physical death[81] and entailing the salvation of the entire human being—both the physical and the non-physical dimensions.

Fr Sophrony secondly sees resurrection as a state of liberation, not only from limited physical existence but also from the passions that human beings experience consequent to the fall. He refers to the state of divine *apatheia* ( i.e., freedom from passions) as "more precious than [anything] that the earth has to offer"[82] and writes: "The state of being free from the passions is distinguished by the constant presence within a man of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which bears witness that we 'have passed from death unto life incorruptible' (cf. 1 Jn 3.14)."[83] Moreover, Fr Sophrony contends that the fear of death is the crucial passion from which the Christian living the resurrection is liberated. He teaches that in the state of resurrection "man now dwells beyond death and fear. The experience of this state of freedom from the passions . . . is first and foremost love that 'casteth out fear' of death (cf. 1 Jn 4.18)."[84] By adding the words "of death" to his citation of St John's First Epistle, Fr Sophrony strengthens his point. For him, the fear of death is the primary

[80]See Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), Ἄσκησις καὶ θεωρία, Hieromonk Zacharias Zacharou, trans. (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 1996), 174. Recall that, in showing such restraint, Fr Sophrony is consistent with the broader witness among current Orthodox thinkers.

[81]Archimandrite Sophrony, *His Life is Mine*, 38.

[82]Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 177.

[83]Ibid., 101.

[84]Ibid., 162.

obstacle—the tyrant that holds humanity in the cycle of deepening sinfulness and spiritual death. In addition, liberation from the fear of death entails, to some extent, liberation from all the other passions that grow out of it. "Living" the resurrection is living liberated from both death and also the fundamentally corrupting passion, fear of death.

Thirdly, living the resurrection means living in love; not only, Fr Sophrony insists, living *in God*, who is love, or living in love *with God*, but also living in love with all human beings—even one's enemies. For Fr Sophrony, love of enemies serves as a litmus test of spiritual progress. He cites the words of his spiritual father, St Silouan: "If we do not love our enemies, we are still in the embrace of death . . . and we do not know God as He should be known."[85] Pointedly, Fr Sophrony did not say that our fight—and ultimate purpose—is merely for our personal resurrection, but also for the resurrection of "each of our fellow human beings."[86] To experience this highest state of existence involves desiring, praying, and working whole-heartedly for the salvation of all humanity—indeed of all creation.[87] Such is Christ's love. Fr Sophrony describes this holy state as witnessed in his spiritual father:

[85]Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 97, 233. On the role of this teaching in St Silouan's work see also Hieromonk Symeon, "The spiritual teaching of Staretz Silouan" in *One Yet Two*, M. Basil Pennington, ed. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 143–54. See also, Theodore Stylianopoulos, "Staretz Silouan: A Modern Orthodox Saint" in *God and Charity: Images of Eastern Orthodox Theology, Spirituality, and Practice*, T. Hopko, ed. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1979), 33–54.

[86]Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 99.

[87]For an excellent discussion of this theme in the work of Sophrony see Ware, " 'We must pray for all': Salvation according to St Silouan" *Sobornost* 19.1 (1997): 34–55.

The Holy Spirit in teaching Silouan Christ-like love bestowed on him the gift of effectively living this love, of taking to himself the life of all mankind. The intensity of his prayer as he wept for the entire world related and bound him with strong bonds to all mankind, to the 'whole Adam.' It was natural that having experienced his own soul's resurrection he should begin to look upon every man as his eternal brother. In this world there are various distinctions and diversions among men but in eternity we are all one. Each of us must, therefore, take heed not only for himself but for this single whole.[88]

"Living" the resurrection is profoundly inter-personal and inter-cosmic.[89] It is also profoundly positive: while including liberation from the passions, this liberation is not self-centered but for the sake of *love*, freedom for the sake of communion with God and all creation. Love, the positive component of Fr Sophrony's ethical vision, lends substantive meaning to human liberation from death and sin. In fact, he argues, Christ-like love—as exemplified in St Silouan—is only possible if one is freed from the bondage of the fear of death. For, how can one possibly love one's enemies while still regarding them as threats? How can one lay down one's own life for others while being driven principally by the fear of bodily death? Thus Fr Sophrony summarizes: "There are two stages to victory over hell. The first is the mastery of the blackness within us ourselves; the second, compassionate love, natural to Divinity, for all

[88]Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan*, 47–48.
[89]For Fr Sophrony, to be truly human is to be inter-personal; that is, to live a life that manifests the hypostatic nature of human beings as creatures in the divine image. While Sophrony's teaching on the hypostatic principle in human beings and God is basic to his theology, a more detailed discussion of it is beyond this article's scope.

creation."[90] Liberation and love are essentially complementary within the resurrected life.

Finally, the dimensions of freedom and love importantly indicate Fr Sophrony's clear conviction that resurrection *begins on earth*. He does not relegate the ideal life wholly to the afterlife. Rather, he affirms the possibility of reaching the ideal state, as living witnesses, prior to physical death. He writes: "History has shown that many of those who waged this war [against death] with unflagging energy, even while they were still here on earth, in spirit beheld the eternal kingdom of the Living God, and passed from death to unending life in the Light of Divine Being."[91] Resurrection from spiritual death begins in the present life, even if only fully attainable after physical death.

## CONCLUSION: SOME PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The meaning of life and the meaning of death are, indeed, deeply intertwined within Orthodox Christian thinking. Therefore, understanding the very meaning of life inescapably requires an understanding of the place and meaning of death. More specifically, it entails distinguishing between physical death and the condition of mortality, on the one hand, and spiritual death and the capacity for alienation from God, on the other, as well as noting the deep influence of the fear of physical death upon sinful human action. And,

[90]Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 79. Later in the same text he writes, "This love is by its origin immortal. It cannot be diminished by suffering, compassion is proper to it. Setting man outside death, this love is *naturally* all compassionate sympathy even for enemies" (Ibid., 101).
[91]Archimandrite Sophrony, *His Life is Mine*, 33–34. See also his *We Shall See Him as He Is*, 45–46, 146, and *On Prayer*, 161.

while many frameworks of Orthodox Christian ethics do not refer explicitly to the themes of death and resurrection (privileging instead the language of *theosis*), nevertheless, Orthodoxy clearly can be described as reflecting an ethical framework that is thanatomorphic, or formed by death. Further, Fr Sophrony Sakharov's work serves as one model for reframing our language about the meaning and purpose of existence so as to reflect Orthodoxy's thanatomorphic character more explicitly.

Yet, having conducted this overview analysis, we are left with an important question: *What implications does the above account of death's place and meaning within an Orthodox ethical framework carry for today's members of the Orthodox Church?* Let me close with a few brief comments of a more practical nature.

Death, both spiritual and physical, impacts each of us in profound ways. Few of us have never experienced the heart-wrenching loss of a beloved parent, sibling, cousin, or friend. Similarly, few of us have never experienced a rupture in our relationship with God or an acute sense of being spiritually dead through our sinfulness. The Orthodox Church teaches that these moments of suffering—while extremely difficult—should not be minimized, quickly suppressed, or played down. Rather, these moments serve as invitations from the crucified and risen Lord to properly orient, or reorient, our existence toward our true purpose of resurrection. As the overwhelming majority of recent Orthodox theologians have confirmed, both spiritual and physical death are tragic, unnatural, perverted, and catastrophic failures of human purpose. Death goes against our deepest identity and our most intense sensibilities as creatures made in God's image, threatening to undermine the very meaning of our lives. Indeed, death goes *against God's ultimate will* for humanity. Experiences of death, then, provide opportunities for repentance: for acknowledging death as the core of humanity's

predicament, for acknowledging the Holy Trinity's love and mercy as humanity's hope for salvation, and for making meaningful changes in our relationship with God and others.[92]

More concretely, how absurd it is to hear people at Orthodox funerals repeating trite expressions of sympathy such as: "She's in a better place now," "God took him into heaven," or "God wanted her near Him." While these expressions are true on a certain level, they all reflect a dismissal of the essentially tragic character of *every* human physical death. Furthermore, the bereaved gain little, if any, comfort from them, and may well—and rightfully—take offense at the way such shallow utterances eclipse the reality of their loss. A silent but caring presence —especially in the immediate wake of a beloved's death—conveys a more pastoral response, one that acknowledges death's mysteriousness and seriousness. If words must be offered, "I am so sorry about this loss," "We will miss her terribly," and "May our Lord comfort you during this time of suffering and grief" are more consistent with an Orthodox understanding of death and, generally, of more comfort to those grieving.

Equally important to bear in mind is the Orthodox tradition's consistent rejection of a purely physicalist vision of death. Human beings are both physical and non-physical, with each dimension capable of both death and resurrection. Although tragic and a

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[92]The spiritual practice of "remembrance of death" is discussed in many Orthodox sources as a way of maintaining vigilance, promoting repentance, cultivating humility, preventing sin, and advancing in general in one's spiritual life. As a spiritual practice, the remembrance of death is engaged in deliberately; however, each experience of death—including those that are unwillingly forced upon us—can carry similar spiritual effects. For a discussion of the practice of "remembrance of death" see, N. P. Vassiliadis, *The Mystery of Death*, Peter A. Chamberas, trans. (Athens: The Orthodox Brotherhood of Theologians "The Savior," 1993), 273–94. See also, Hamalis, "Formed by Death," 79–93 and 267–347.

reminder of broken humanity, physical death (even following a long life or as a blessed release from a condition of great suffering) is neither the only death, nor the most important death, from which we ought to seek salvation. The reality and ultimate seriousness of spiritual death must shape our ethical decisions on issues ranging from abortion to global hunger, from cloning to consumerism, and from euthanasia to war and terrorism.

As the Orthodox community strives to respond to the many complex challenges that confront us today, and which will undoubtedly take new forms in the years ahead, we must mine our tradition's fullness creatively and constructively. May this imperative promote openness toward additional ethical frameworks, especially those that center around the meaning and place of death, and beckon us to live the resurrection, here and now.

# HONEST TO GOD:
## CONFESSION AND DESIRE[1]

## Aristotle Papanikolaou

The Orthodox Christian practice of confession is in danger of falling into disuse and becoming irrelevant. Today, the lay Orthodox Christian generally does not consider confession of any kind as necessary for spiritual life and has difficulty believing that he or she would need to voice their sins to a Christian community or to a priest before they are forgiven; that the slate is wiped clean only if one confesses their sins publicly to a community or privately to a priest.

I attribute this rejection to the legalistic understanding that has shrouded interpretations of the practice of confession in its multiple forms within the Christian tradition. A legalistic understanding of the sacrament of confession means if one confesses his or her sins to the priest, then this particular list of sins is cancelled. Confession must be repeated in order to clean the slate, which is required if one hopes to gain entry into heaven.

In this essay, I intend to recover what I think is a lost understanding of the sacrament of confession, one in which the greater emphasis lies on the transformative power of the spoken word of truth.

Confession is sacramental—it makes God present, not in canceling out sins but in the very act of speaking honestly about our story to the priest. In this act of being honest to God, one experiences God's love and forgiveness, and by so doing, grows closer to God and progresses in *theosis*, which means to participate in the life of God. The power of honest speech to communicate God's love and forgiveness depends on the concurrent role of the priest as the icon of Christ in the act of confession. If we go beyond the legalistic understanding, the sacrament of confession can be a means through which we experience a greater desire and love for God.

## CONFESSION AS AN EVENT OF COMMUNION

Confession is a sacrament in the Orthodox Church. The Church names an object or an event "sacramental" when it functions as a means through which we experience the presence of God. Given this definition, our tradition affirms that the entire world is potentially sacramental, i.e., has the power to convey the presence of God, but this power depends on how we relate to the world. As Alexander Schmemann tells us in his classic book, *The Eucharist*: "Christian worship is symbolic, because, first of all, the world itself, God's own creation, is symbolic, is *sacramental*."[2] The Church has also given the name of "sacrament" to specific acts and events within the Church; the two most notable and earliest ones are Eucharist and baptism.

We often hear as Orthodox that Christ instituted the sacrament of confession when he gave the disciples the authority to bind and loose: "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in

[2]Alexander Schmemann, *The Eucharist* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 40.

heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mt 18.18); or when he said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20.23). The sacrament of confession, however, as we know it today, developed over time and started to take its present liturgical form around the tenth century.[3] As John Chryssavgis tells us, the sacrament of confession is rooted in the Bible, in the sense that the act of confessing sins is evident throughout. The quintessential expression of Old Testament confession is Psalm 50/51.[4] There is also the exhortation in the Epistle of St James to "[t]herefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed" (5.16). In the early Church, confession developed into a public act that was done in the midst of the congregation. In other words, one would confess his or her sins before the entire church. Eventually, confession would become our familiar one-to-one encounter with the spiritual father or priest.

In the history of the Church's understanding of the sacrament, a particular interpretation began to dominate, one that continues to take hold of our imagination today when we think about confession. This interpretation is often referred to as the "juridical and penitential" understanding of confession, i.e., confession began to be understood in legalistic terms. What does that mean? This understanding of confession goes something like this: human beings commit particular sinful acts; God writes these sinful acts in a book

[3] For this history, see John Chryssavgis, *Repentance and Confession* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Press, 1990). See also Kallistos Ware, "The Orthodox Experience of Repentance," in *The Inner Kingdom* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 43–58.

[4] The organization and numbering of the Psalms differs slightly between the (*Masoretic*) Hebrew and the (*Septuagint*) Greek manuscripts. This psalm appears as Psalm 50 in *The Orthodox Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson, 2008) and as Psalm 51 in other English-language Bibles.

and keeps tabs on them; we go to confession; after we go, God rips those pages from the book—a necessary action, if we are to secure a spot in this place we call "heaven."

I suggest in this essay that this interpretation is not the best one available. First, it misunderstands and misrepresents the goal of the Christian life, according to our Orthodox tradition. The Fathers tell us repeatedly that the goal of this life is to be in union with God. If this is the case, then heaven is not a place: heaven is God—union with God's very life. God does not want to put us in a place; God wants to be in communion with us.

Second, this juridical, legalistic understanding over-emphasizes the notions of fear of God and the understanding of God as Judge. We must fear God and God is our Judge, but as St Maximus the Confessor tells us, in relation to God, we must progress from fear to love; from relating to God out of fear to relating to God out of love. He tells us:

"[f]or these five reasons will the soul abstain from sin: the fear of men, the fear of judgment, the future reward, the love of God, or finally, the prompting of conscience."

Then he says:

"[t]he fear of the Lord is twofold. The first type is produced in us from threats of punishment . . . The second is coupled with love itself and constantly produces reverence in the soul, lest through the familiarity of love it becomes presumptuous of God. Perfect love casts out the first fear from the soul by which possessing it no longer fears punishment."[5]

[5] *Four Hundred Chapters On Love*, in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writ-*

God is Judge, but God is first and foremost the one who loves us, because God is Love.

Third, this legalistic understanding implies that we can simply erase and ignore the sins of our past. Our actions, however, shape who we become, and they can never be erased. They are part of our history. For better or for worse, we must claim ownership of the actions and the being-acted-upon that have formed our personal story. If confession witnesses to the truthfulness of that history, then the forgiveness and mercy offered in confession cannot be about forgetfulness: they are about the realization that past actions do not become permanent obstacles in relating to God. In other words, God grants us real forgiveness in the form "I love you in spite of your faults," or real healing in the form "I'm always there for you no matter what you do, no matter what happens to you," but not in the form "Let's just forget the whole thing ever happened."

Fourth, this understanding of confession reduces our relationship with God to one of bargaining and contract. A deal is struck between the human being and God: as long as we confess, God has to rip that page of sins from the book. God is not the God of contracts or bargaining, but of love —an immeasurable gift, where the gift is *the Giver,* so that we can never imagine matching such a gift. Therefore, a legalistic understanding does not do justice to the power of the act of confessing, which brings the confessant in closer union with God. It cannot explain how a wash-the-slate-clean approach allows for a greater participation in God's life.

If the legalistic approach is not the best way to understand confession, then what is? First and foremost, we have to keep in mind the goal of our Orthodox Christian life: being in union with God. To some extent, we are already in relation with God, but our goal is to

*ings,* trans. George C. Berthold (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 2:81 (p. 58) and 1:81–82 (p. 44).

deepen this relation by moving more intimately into the life of God. If we keep our goal in mind, then confession is not about ripping pages of sins from our life history. Rather, the Orthodox Church has recognized confession as *sacramental* precisely because it makes the life of God more present to us; it has the power to move us closer to God. How does confession do this?

We can easily see the power of the spoken word of truth operative in acts of confession[6] between two human beings. Since God made humans in the image and likeness of God, an analogy exists between our relationship with God and our relationship with other human beings. Analogy denotes not only similarity between two kinds of things or events, but also dissimilarity. Our relationship with other human beings is similar to, but also different than, our relationship with God. We can, thus, look to relationships between humans to give us insight into our relationship with God.

When we relate to other human beings, if we hope to grow closer or more intimate, either in the form of a friendship or marital intimacy, we have to perform certain acts. If two people hope to grow closer, then they have to speak honestly about themselves, which includes things in their lives they may be afraid to reveal. Confession is an act of speaking honestly about ourselves, about all that we have done and experienced, including all that we fear to speak.

This act of confession is not easy. When we first meet someone, we begin with small talk, then we open up a little more; eventually, we always arrive at that moment when we think about telling our new friend the things that we fear to speak. Even as we imagine saying what we are afraid to say, we feel an overwhelming sense of anx-

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[6]In turning my attention to the relationship between two human beings, I am using "confession" in a non-technical sense to mean acts of truth telling, rather than to refer strictly to the sacrament itself, i.e., the act of truth telling to the priest.

iety. Yet we want to say it, we want to speak it to this new friend. We want to give it voice so that it can be received, but we can only hope that this friend is one worthy of its reception—one whom we can trust, who will continue to love us no matter what we say to them. We are afraid to speak for fear that the other might look at us differently. It is not simply the case that saying this "thing" will make us vulnerable; rather, we fear vulnerability because it gives the one to whom we speak a power that can affect us. Finally, the risk is taken, the thing is said, the words are spoken, and we await the response.

Once the thing is said and received in a space of trust, acceptance, love, and understanding, the two people cannot help but be closer, more intimate friends than they were. They cannot help it because the very act of speaking and hearing the confession moves people closer together, almost imperceptibly. This spoken word of truth hovers between two people with the power to reconfigure irrevocably the space of their relationship: for the worse, if used to denigrate and humiliate, but for the better, if received in the spirit of trust and love.

How does all this relate to the Church's sacramental understanding of confession? Just as speaking truth in the context of caring, trust, and love brings two people closer together, being honest to God will bring one closer to God, who is eternally caring, trustworthy, and loving.

Nevertheless, people often ask, "Why do I need to go to confession? Why can't I just confess in the privacy of my room?" or, "God knows all my sins, why do I have to say them out loud to another person?" The answer is that not saying them or saying them in the privacy of our room does not produce the same kind of confession as going to a priest. Imagine two scenarios. In the first, we go into our room, lock the door, and start talking to God. In the second, we contemplate going to a priest for confession, i.e., to say the things

that we would not normally tell anyone else. As we think about making that appointment, about approaching the church, what often occurs are overwhelming feelings of anxiety and fear. These are the same emotions and feelings we would have when confessing to a new friend, but would not have if we were to speak to God in the privacy of our room.

Feelings and emotions make confession real. Why? Only in experiencing emotions and feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and fear can we experience real forgiveness. We experience real forgiveness when our anxious and fearful feelings and emotions are replaced by those of acceptance and love. Just as with a friend we would not know that we were really accepted and loved despite our faults unless we spoke the things we feared to say, so with God; we cannot really feel God's acceptance and love unless we approach God and, in fear and anxiety, speak to God what we are afraid to say.

The church fathers write about how confession must be accompanied by "tears of repentance." St Isaac the Syrian says "[m]any show the appearance of repentance; but only he possesses it in truth who is grieved in heart."7 These "tears of repentance," however, are not readily forthcoming unless we personally encounter Christ.

How can this encounter happen if we cannot physically meet Christ? Because we can speak to Christ "face-to-face," as it were, through the person of the priest. Why a priest and not in the privacy of my room? Again because someone must be on the "other side" of the confession if the experience of forgiveness is to be real. Since we cannot have God physically on the other side of our confession, as we can with a friend—one of the differences between our relationship with a human being and our relationship with God—the closest way we have of speaking to God is through the priest. Why? The priest, by virtue of being the leader of the community, de facto

7Cited in Chryssavgis, *Repentance and Confession*, 53.

symbolizes, or is an icon of, Christ.[8] The priest in his person symbolizes something that no other person can symbolize. Confessing the same thing to a priest, a friend, a parent, or a therapist, can each be a different kind of experience, because the priest, friend, parent, and therapist assume different roles, hence symbolizing something different to the confessant.[9] By virtue of his position in the community, the priest symbolizes Christ to the confessant in a way that no other person can. Speaking to the priest is *as if* speaking to Christ.

Confession to another person—even if, or, perhaps, especially if, that person is Christ—is not easy. Speaking honestly and truthfully about ourselves is never easy, but once we speak it, once we say it, once "it" is "out there," we realize—more importantly, we *feel*— Christ forgives us, loves us, and will always love us; he simply wants us to be honest to ourselves and to God. Someone on the other side of confession ensures that we are *most honest* to ourselves and to God.

I wish to suggest something stronger: only in experiencing God's vast forgiveness for us and, in this realized experience of God's grace, do we grow in union with Christ. St Isaac the Syrian continues: "And from the first apartment of that hidden behavior these tears will begin and they will conduct him to the complete love of God."[10] Lack of confession keeps us from recognizing, from experiencing, the vastness of God's love. The feeling of liberation produced by confession is not a feeling of "Whew, the page is ripped," but instead one of liberation from fear and anxiety—a feeling of

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[8]The priest, according to Orthodox Christian theology, is the icon of the bishop, who is the icon of Christ.

[9]One could say that each symbolizes God to the confessant in a different way and in different degrees.

[10]Chryssavgis, *Repentance and Confession*, 51.

gratitude for being in a trusted, close, and intimate relationship with Christ. If we say the things we most fear to say to a friend and as a result become closer to that friend, then, when we say the things we most fear to say to Christ, we become closer to Christ—because Christ will always love us, accept us, and forgive us no matter what we do. He simply wants us to speak honestly to him. We can do this only by standing before someone who, at that moment, is a living icon of Christ's person. We can speak to Christ in our room, but not the same way: that kind of confession cannot evoke "tears of repentance," which bring us closer to another human being and bring us closer to Christ.

Why do we need to confess if God already knows all our thoughts and actions? God still wants our confession, because saying it is the only way we can experience how much God loves us. The privacy of our room does not evoke the feelings of fear, anxiety, and nervousness at saying what we most do not want to say. Yes, God knows everything, but God still wants us to say it, and to say it in such a way that it is not easy for us.

## THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST

Exploring a fundamental truth of our Orthodox faith about the joining of the material and the spiritual in the incarnation will demonstrate how the priest serves as the symbol of Christ in the Orthodox Christian community. Because God is Spirit (Jn 4.24), and because God became incarnate in human flesh, we can experience God in and through material and bodily forms. God is present through the humanity of Jesus and, consequently, God can be experienced in and through other material, such as icons, or in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. As we encounter the person of the priest—

who in the moment of confession functions as an icon of the person of Christ to us—it is as if we are speaking to Christ.

If we would imagine Christ coming to earth to visit us, and asking us to confess to him, we would be afraid. We would secretly hope that he did not know everything, even though we believe he is God. We would be afraid of what he might think of us. We would be like Adam and Eve after transgressing God's law: when God searched them out, "the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (Gen 3.8). God asked them if they had eaten from "the tree which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen 3.11). Adam blamed Eve, and then Eve blamed the serpent. Would God's response have been different if they both would have simply said: "Yes Lord, we did eat from that tree, we disobeyed you, and we are truly sorry." But, of course, they did not say this, because they were afraid of what God might think, and of punishment. But ironically, their attempts to shift blame, not to accept responsibility, not to confess, only led to further division and distance from God.

In considering the role of the priest, I want to begin by affirming that the priest is not a dispenser of grace. Moreover, the interpretive tendency to treat the sacraments like magic, and priests like dispensers of grace, lends itself to the accusation by certain Christian groups that the Orthodox Church is paganized. Rather, the priest, as the representative of the bishop, is the icon of Christ. According to our tradition, through the "icon," or image, we encounter what is divine, that is, God. When we speak to the priest in confession, we are speaking to Christ, and the priest should have the humility to recognize his true role. The importance of the sacrament lies in the meeting between the person who comes to confession and Christ. The power of the sacrament lies in the saying to Christ and in the hearing by Christ (in the person of the priest) of

all that we fear. No matter who the priest, and no matter the faults of the priest, we receive the grace of Christ's forgiving love and embrace in the transformative exchange of "saying" and "hearing."

Given this understanding, those who presently suggest that confession can only be heard by a particular monk or a perceived "holy person" purport an extremely dangerous, even idolatrous, idea: idolatrous because they implicitly claim that holiness is somehow fully embodied in a particular space—the space of the holy person. (If this holy person were truly holy, he or she would disavow such a practice.) We must remind ourselves that no person is, or will ever be, sinless on this earth. No matter to whom we go for confession, that person is a sinner. Consequently, confession "works" not because of the degree of holiness of the person in front of us, but because, by the grace of God, the priest or monk before us stands as an icon of Christ. In this encounter, the acts of saying and hearing are transformative, grace-filled events that allow us to experience Christ's loving forgiveness and embrace, which are not contingent on the holiness of the person who stands in front of us. No matter what the character of the priest or monk hearing the confession, when we say "it" we know that Christ hears "it." The saying and the hearing comprise the important elements for transforming our desire for God, for bringing us closer to God. We do not become clean—and, by "clean" I mean transforming our desires—by touching a purportedly clean or holy person or material object, but by encountering Christ, by speaking to Christ. Never, ever, has the accepted practice within our tradition been to promote the idea that we must confess to a particular person thought to be holy. What has been acceptable is the practice to search out such a person for discernment and for wise spiritual counsel. In reality, there are in the Orthodox world persons who have greater spiritual discernment than others. This does not, however, suggest that con-

fession would be effective only when spoken to and heard by these persons, and anyone truly spiritually wise would affirm this as the tradition of the Church.

Rather than seeking a confessor who is purportedly "holy," one ought to search for a confessor with discernment, that is, with the ability to help the confessant make progress in spiritual life—the gift of being able to "see" what is needed to grow toward God. This gift comes with experience, so not all priests have discernment. Recognizing discernment as a gift that comes with experience, the Church for this reason does not confer the title of "Confessor" on all priests: one is not a confessor in the eyes of the Church simply by virtue of ordination to the priesthood.

In an ideal situation, one would have an ongoing, long-term relationship with a parish priest possessing the gift of discernment. Where this is not possible, one could seek such a priest with discernment—not necessarily because of the priest's purported holiness (contact with which would erase one's sins), but because such a priest would have the capacity to offer spiritual advice that guides one more deeply into the life of God. However, even confession to a trustworthy priest who lacks the gift of discernment, *as if* one is speaking to Christ—by virtue of the priest being an icon of Christ— can have a transformative effect on the confessant. Least ideal would be simply receiving the prayer of forgiveness read at confession, but even this act has a transformative effect because of the sacramental power of approaching Christ for forgiveness, through the priest.

If the primary goal of confession is to transform the confessant so that she participates more in the life of God, then the priest's primary role in confession is to listen and receive, not to judge. Often, priests feel compelled to remind the confessant of how "wrong" or "bad" a particular action, feeling, emotion, or desire is. The priest

should recognize, however, that by virtue of their approaching the priest, a person already knows that a particular action, feeling, emotion, or desire is keeping them from a more authentic relationship with God. Most people who come to confession want to act, feel, or desire differently; therefore, the priest needs to receive the confession as a call for help toward transformation.

Discernment can only be applied if a priest listens. If discernment indicates saying the right words or advising the right course of action to facilitate transformation, then the priest needs to know as much as possible about the confessant's story. This necessarily entails listening. A priest's responsibility goes beyond the perfunctory application of penances (*epitimia*)—ordering someone to abstain from Holy Communion for three years may lead to the desired transformation, but it may not. One should not demand *epitimia* for their own sake, as if a certain amount of *epitimia* would balance out the confessed sins. Whatever a priest recommends should be with an eye toward helping the confessant desire God above all things, which will affect how the confessant relates to family, friends, and co-workers—the "neighbor" of the Gospel account. The priest, however, cannot serve this role without listening and receiving the confession from a non-judgmental stance.

Finally, the priest must recognize the power of his person. Sadly, in the history of our Church, in rare instances, priests have violated the confessional. A priest who hears a confession and then gossips about it will only drive the confessant away from the Church and, hence, from Christ. In the person of the gossiping priest, the confessant sees not the loving Christ, but manipulation, deception, and selfishness. Such is the symbolic power of the priest. If, however, the priest loves and cares about the spiritual life of the confessant, then the confessant experiences the love, care, and forgiveness of Christ, in the person of the priest. The priest presents the face of

Christ to the confessant—again, such is his symbolic power. The priest has the power to either drive people away from Christ or to draw them closer, because, in his person, the confessant "sees" Christ.

Additionally, if confession transforms the person, including desires and emotions, then promoting confession as "purification" before Holy Communion is misleading. Even if we go to confession the day before we receive Communion, I am sure that in a 24-hour span, we will do something to taint that purity. Even if the Church were to institute mass confession at the Divine Liturgy directly before Communion, within the span of a few minutes we could have thoughts about other people in the church that would taint that purity. We can never be purified before Holy Communion, and that is why, as we pray, we receive it for "the remission of our sins." We are never fully healed after acts of confession, and that is why confession must be continuous, an ongoing process, a series of acts that move us closer to God. Our goal to progressively move closer to God, to progressively change our desire, to progressively increase our desire for God recalls the words of St Isaac the Syrian: "Hence, until the moment of death neither the time nor the works of repentance can ever be complete."[11]

## CONFESSION AND DESIRE

How, does confession affect our desires? To explore this link between confession and desire—between speaking and desire—I will once again use illustrations and examples. Let us return to our example of two friends who "confess" to one another, who reveal

[11]Ibid., 52.

things to one another that they would be afraid to say to others. Safe to say, such friends would find themselves loving each other more than they did before, because their "confessions" occurred in a secure, loving, and forgiving space. Theirs would be a love that had grown—a deeper love.

But, what of two people who hate each other—how might they change this hateful situation to one in which they actually desire the other's presence? Again, confession is a prerequisite. The two must at least attempt to speak honestly to one another, which may or may not end up changing how each feels toward the other. But, transforming feelings of hate cannot begin unless honest speaking, i.e., confession, occurs—a process evident in attempts at reconciliation that occur in many of the war-stricken areas of our world.

I once heard a story by David Steele when he was a Fellow for Religion and Conflict Resolution at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, at an event for the Boston Theological Institute. He narrated how, during the conflict in Bosnia, he was able to bring together a Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox person in the same room. The individuals held a series of conversations that began with blame and accusation. Over time, as each was allowed to speak, to tell his story, to confess his innermost feelings and thoughts, the dynamics of the conversation started to change. The relationships in the room moved from hatred to friendship, and at one point, the Orthodox person in the room said something like: "I now know what you have experienced; you have lost your children; your loss is the same as my loss, your pain is the same as my pain." What began with angry and hate-filled speech eventually led to empathy—the recognition of the humanity of the other and *a desire* to move beyond hatred toward reconciliation. In and through confession, persons are freed from hate and anger, and liberated for being reconciled to each other.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is another venue in which we observe the link between confession and desire. In AA, the alcoholic must confess to being an alcoholic; no easy thing to admit publicly. The individual does so in the midst of a public gathering reminiscent of the public confessions in the early church. Implicit is the conviction that only by speaking honestly about one's addiction, only by confessing to others, can one hope to keep this desire—this impulse—under control. Alcoholics always say they are never cured. But in and through their community of support, where they are accepted in spite of this impulse and where they are able to confess this hard-to-admit impulse, they have hope that this one desire will not dominate their lives. And what happens? The alcoholic is liberated from the tyranny of this desire and, in the process, other desires are liberated for fulfillment—the desire to be responsible to family and work, to be in proper relationship to his or her friends, children, or spouse. Confession, therefore, potentially liberates us from destructive desires, so that we can fulfill what we desire most in life.

The recovery process in situations involving abuse or violence demonstrates one of the most powerful examples of the link between confession and desire. Not being an expert on abuse, for this portion of my essay I draw on Judith Herman's classic book on the subject, *Trauma and Recovery*.

Experiences of abuse and violence are among the most unspeakable acts. People do not want to hear about them, and those who suffer from abuse or violence do not usually want to speak about it. Yet, we must hear about those who suffer from abuse and violence: those raped in random places and by trusted people; those children sexually molested; spouses and children who suffer from physical and emotional abuse; those who suffer abuse from their own governments; and those who struggle with trauma after experiences of

violence whether in war zones or simply on their own streets. Recovery is, in fact, possible, and there are many who struggle toward recovery.

Two points regarding abuse and violence as related to confession and desire deserve consideration. First, the road to recovery requires that the person suffering from abuse and violence must eventually speak to a qualified professional. Though this is seemingly obvious, it is very difficult for people to speak about abuse and violence that they have suffered. What person would so easily say they were raped, or sexually molested by someone they trusted, or emotionally and physically abused, or witnessed the decapitation of a friend in Vietnam, or saw people jumping out of the windows of the World Trade Center? No one. They would be afraid to speak it, afraid that by speaking it they would relive the event. Or, they might fear that by speaking it others might think ill of them. Yet, for recovery, it must be spoken—it must be confessed in the sense of honestly speaking the things about ourselves that we most fear to say.

Through suggesting that the process of recovery involves an act of confession, I am in no way imputing blame to the victim of abuse. Tragically, and for too long in American society, survivors of abuse and violence have been blamed. Even if Americans have advanced beyond this false—and really stupid—way of thinking, most of the world has not. Let me put it even more strongly: the person who suffers from abuse and violence is in absolutely no way to blame for their suffering. They did not commit sin, but they are suffering from the consequences of sin. Situations of abuse and violence show clearly how the destruction of sinful acts is not limited to the soul of the person who commits them. Being relational, sin extends beyond the person who commits it and destroys the lives of others. The victim of abuse has not sinned. Sin has happened to them. They

are caught up against their will in the destructive, sinful acts of abuse and violence. The insidiousness of sin reveals itself even more when the survivors of abuse and violence blame themselves and internalize feelings of shame and guilt, even though they are in no way to blame. The sin of the abuser or perpetrator of violence infects the soul of his victim and, like a malignant disease, eats away at self-esteem, self-worth, and life itself.

However, it is not easy for victims to speak about such experiences. Herman's work shows that even in the midst of well-trained professionals such speaking is shrouded with fear and requires courage. But, done in the context of a therapeutic relationship, which sometimes involves group therapy, recovery is possible.

This brings me to the second point I'd like to highlight regarding abuse as related to confession and desire: What does recovery entail? What does recovery look like? In part, recovery transforms the landscape of a survivor's feelings and desires. Crucial is to understand that abuse and violence severely undercut and damage a person's capacity to trust and be vulnerable in relationships, even in relationships with loved ones. As Herman tells us: "[t]raumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendships, love and community." [12] The results of abuse, in part, are isolation, withdrawal, disassociation and fear of relationships. Eventually, after progressing through the various stages of recovery, Herman writes: "the survivor has regained some capacity for appropriate trust . . . she is now ready to risk deepening her relationships . . . As the trauma recedes into the past, it no longer represents a barrier to intimacy." [13]

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[12]Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 51.
[13]Ibid.

In the process of recovery, which necessarily entails confession—speaking honestly about the unspeakable—persons suffering from abuse and violence can be liberated from fear of trust and intimacy, and can have their deepest desires for relationships of trust and intimacy fulfilled. A person who has suffered from abuse and violence can find their capacity to trust, to be vulnerable, and to be in stable relationships marked by caring, friendship, and love, slowly restored. Recovery, in part, transforms the survivor: feelings of fears no longer obstruct the fulfillment of the desire for trusting and caring relationships. What occurs through such a process is both liberation and transformation.

I have spent some time discussing situations of abuse and violence in order to highlight the link between confession—understood as speaking what we most fear to speak—and desire. I also have illustrated the power of confession to transform the landscape of our desires: to free our desires from destructive feelings and impulses, and to liberate for fulfillment our desires for loving, caring relationships. Even though the sacrament of confession *is not* psychotherapy, the connection between confession and recovery binds closely together the therapeutics within the larger tradition of modern psychology and the tradition of spirituality within our Orthodox faith. Because of the evident affinity existing between these two traditions, priests would display irresponsibility in disparaging modern psychology—from the pulpit, in private conversations, or in contemporary writings. The relationship between modern psychology and our own spiritual tradition can be one of conversation and engagement. Rather than presenting a choice between priest *or* therapist, the Church can recognize that both are needed—as gifts from God for the healing of soul and body.

## WORDS TO SPEAK IN CONFESSION

Lastly, I wish to address the kinds of things to speak about in confession. In a way, especially after discussing situations of abuse, this becomes somewhat obvious: what we need to speak about is the unspeakable, and there are many unspeakable things that afflict human existence. Let me give you another, frightening, example, which I heard on National Public Radio, and which illustrates how the therapeutics effected by the sacraments of the Church might complement the therapeutics of modern psychology.

Some women after childbirth suffer from post-partum depression, which may manifest with the appearance of certain kinds of obsessive thoughts. The thoughts are actually quite shocking, but they occur spontaneously and are not willed by the mother. The thoughts involve doing something harmful to the newborn child. One example given was of a mother who was holding her newborn, and as she walked by a fireplace, she had a spontaneous vision of throwing her baby into the fireplace. The image is shocking and repulsive. Our first reaction might be: "How can someone have such a thought about her own child?" But that kind of reaction would keep the woman from actually saying or admitting that she is experiencing such horrific things. It keeps her from saying, "I have uncontrollable anxiety and I don't know what to do about it," "I'm depressed," "I have obsessive thoughts." She would fear to speak what she most needs to speak. She would be afraid of what others would think, or be afraid that others would not really listen but simply judge and condemn her. These types of fears keep people from getting the help they need and perpetuate a condition that feeds off itself, and gets worse.

People need to speak in order to be healed. In the case of the woman who experiences such shocking images of her child, those

images are ways of informing her of what is really going on in her soul: unhappiness, or anger, or fear about recognizing her feelings. Moreover, behavioral techniques can help people who experience these types of images, to mitigate their effects. For example, sometimes a person is advised to let the thoughts continue, to see where they lead, instead of trying to keep the thoughts from coming back. Sometimes, then, the shocking image ends more softly: the baby thrown into the fire really turns out to be a doll.

People need a space to speak freely and honestly about what is going on in their own soul. And, in the case of the woman and the image of the fireplace, she may be experiencing feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration after the birth of a child—and be immensely guilty about it. The proper question, however, would not be, "How can she feel such things?" The point is, humans *do* feel such things; they *have* such feelings even when they are not supposed to, even in situations that normally would provoke happiness. (Do we honestly believe that any woman would want to have such shocking images after the birth of her child?) So, the proper question would be: What can be done to move this person from a situation of sadness, anger, and frustration to one of peace, joy, and contentment? The Church provides the answer: a space to speak about the unspeakable—like obsessive images—in an ongoing attempt to figure out what their soul is telling them about their inner depths. The process of confession, of speaking and hearing, can diffuse the power of obsessive images to the point where such images become noticeably absent because, in a person's soul, peace and contentment have slowly replaced anger and frustration.

We need a space to speak about the unspeakable on our road to self-knowledge, in order to change the landscape of our desire so we can fill our soul with the gifts of the Spirit—joy, peace, contentment, and love. These illustrations simply show the link between

confession—an encounter of speaking and hearing—and our desires and emotions. This encounter has the power to liberate us from destructive desires and to fulfill our desire for what is most meaningful in this world—love of God and neighbor. When we go to confession, we hope for freedom: freedom to fulfill our deepest desires for what is good and godly, freedom from tyrannical impulses.

However, at the same time as we experience freedom, we experience what may be termed "increase." If we make confession a habit through which we recognize our goal as union with God, and if we speak honestly to God, we will notice an increase in our desire for God. It is very difficult to explain how this happens. One has to experience it. But the experience parallels what Anthony Bloom says in his work, *Beginning to Pray,* which I paraphrase thusly:

If one prays regularly and from the heart, that is, speaks to God honestly in prayer, then what one will notice is that over time one will desire to pray more; one will desire God more. It is the same with confession. If one sees it as an ongoing conversation with Christ; if one does it regularly; if one is honest, one will experience the love of Christ and one will desire Christ.[14]

But we must have the courage to speak the unspeakable, even if the unspeakable relates to God. Even if we are angry, frustrated, doubtful, and disappointed with God, we must speak it to God. No matter what, *we must eventually say it if we hope to transform it.*

Confessors should not discourage the expression of those feelings—God can take it. Likewise, they should not discourage the say-

[14]Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970). Author's note: This paraphrase expresses a central tenet of Archbishop Bloom's book.

ing of vices that are repeated often; there is significance in the mere fact that a person is coming to say them. I am reminded of the scene in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, where Demetri Karamazov, the oldest brother, an undisciplined, pitiful, but sympathetic figure, confronts the elder Zosima and admits to him all his vices, without any indication that he is going to change. He asks Zosima, "Should one fall into despair?" The elder Zosima turns to him and says, "No, for it is enough that you are distressed by it . . . You have already done much if you can understand yourself so deeply and so sincerely!"[15] This is echoed by St John Chrysostom:

> Such is the love of God for mankind that He never rejects genuine repentance, but even if someone were to go beyond the limit of evil and desired to return from there to the way of virtue, He would receive and approach him, doing everything to guide him to his former condition. In fact, He is still more loving: for even if one did not show all repentance—even the very least— He would reward him much for the little repentance shown.[16]

When a person has the courage to admit a particular vice, that courage should be acknowledged, and we should not expect someone to change automatically. The transformation that occurs from confession is ongoing and takes time. Confession must be seen as not only an act of saying and hearing, but also as a process fueled by hope— hope that the desire for transformation that gives a person courage to speak the unspeakable will eventually increase, liberating the person from unhappiness, doubts, shame, and guilt, and replacing these with the gifts of the Spirit, as St Paul conveys

[15]Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Everyman's Library, 1992), 57.
[16]Cited in Chryssavgis, *Repentance and Confession*, 26.

them: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal 5.22).

I want to end this section with a brief reflection on the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15.11–32), only to highlight that, unlike Adam and Eve, the prodigal son had the courage to admit he that had wronged his father and that he was sorry. Such a confession met with a loving embrace and a feast, but the prodigal first had to speak his confession in order to realize the infinite generosity of the father's forgiveness. Also interesting is the other, older brother's response. The older brother had a legitimate complaint: it really was not fair to him that the father had killed the fatted calf to celebrate his prodigal son's return. In many ways, the brother's response highlights more vividly that *confession is not about what we do but about who we are.* The brother had done everything right according to his father's expectations and expected a reward, which was instead given to someone who had done everything wrong. What the brother lacked in his heart (although he had done everything right) was the kind of love that would make him rejoice over the feast in honor of his brother—even if he really was more deserving of a feast than him. The older brother could actually have gone to confession and said "I did everything right; I deserve a feast." But his heart would be lacking in the kind of love that would rejoice in this: that he would receive the same type of feast as someone who had done everything wrong but had recently repented. The question becomes: How can the older brother bring himself to love in that way, to love as the father loved? He would have to begin with the way the story ends, with his expressing honestly how angry and sad he was at the injustice, in the hope that some day love and joy would push out the anger and sadness from his heart.

## CONCLUSION

Confession is not just about what we do, but about who we are and who we can become. One of the most tragic facts of Christian history is that confession became reduced to a legalistic and penitential understanding—we go to confession to wipe God's slate clean. This understanding has caused confession to fall into disuse, and the Church, in many ways, is to blame for portraying confession in this way. We need to confess not to rip the page of sins from God's book, but to participate in an act of saying and hearing that transforms the landscape of our desires, of our heart, so that our treasure lies in God and in nothing else.

There is something extremely powerful about speaking the truth to someone who is listening. In the context of speaking to the priest in confession, we are speaking to Christ, with the hope of growing more in love with him. Confession as a practice of the Church, together with prayer and fasting, helps increase our desire for God.[17] And, all these practices help us fulfill the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22.37). This commandment is not simply about doing, but about becoming—becoming what we were created to be: persons whose hearts are aflame with desire for God.

Ultimately, all I have argued can be summarized, not surprisingly, by St Augustine:

And certainly from you, O Lord, before whose eyes the depth of the human conscience is laid bare, what in me could be hidden

[17]Fasting, another misunderstood practice, is slowly falling into disuse, but is essential for growing in love toward God, and deserves treatment in a similar manner.

even though I were unwilling to confess it to you? I could not
then be hiding myself from you, but you from myself."[18]

By not confessing we are not hiding anything from God, we are hiding God from ourselves. When we speak the truth, we not only learn the truth about ourselves, but we experience the truth of God's love and forgiveness.

[18]St Augustine *Confessions*, 10.2.2; cited in Chryssavgis, *Repentance and Confession*, 31.

# INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE CHALLENGE OF PROSELYTISM

## Elizabeth H. Prodromou

### INTRODUCTION

In October 1998, the United States Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), which established the promotion of religious freedom and the combat of religious persecution around the world, as part of American foreign policy. The IRFA created three new entities to facilitate America's commitment to advancing the cause of religious freedom around the world, including the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).[1] An independent, bipartisan body charged with monitoring the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of

[1]The IRFA also created an Office of International Religious Freedom and an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, in the U.S. Department of State, and a Special Advisor on International Religious Freedom, in the National Security Council. For the full text of the IRFA, see http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/intlrel.htm.

Human Rights[2] and related international instruments, the USCIRF is mandated to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and the Congress. Comprised of nine, private citizens appointed by the White House and Congressional leadership, since its formation the commission has reflected the remarkable religious diversity of the United States.[3] In June 2004, I was appointed as a commissioner to the USCIRF by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and following my reappointment in June 2006, I was also elected to serve for one year as a Vice Chair on the commission; I continue to serve on the commission to the present.

As an American citizen, I have been honored by the appointment to the USCIRF. I respect and appreciate America's vibrant democracy being inextricably linked to the country's principled support for religious freedom, expressed through the Free Establishment and Free Exercise clauses of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Consequently, I understand the commission appointment as an opportunity to responsibly exercise America's vast moral and practical resources, so that U.S. foreign policy enhances religious freedom as a universal human right. At the same time I accept that the actual expression of protections for religious human rights will differ across national contexts.

As a political scientist whose academic research deals with the linkages between security, democracy, and religion, I have experienced my work on the USCIRF as an extraordinary opportunity to

[2]On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed this document.

[3]Commissioners are ". . . selected among distinguished individuals noted for their knowledge and experience in fields relevant to the issue of international religious freedom, including foreign affairs, direct experience abroad, human rights, and international law." Ibid. For a full list of the past and current commissioners, see *www.uscirf.gov*.

evaluate the applied realities of social science theory. Specifically, USCIRF fact-finding visits to other countries have offered empirical evidence of how state elites and actors in civil society assess trade-offs between democracy and security in comparatively different ways. Such trade-offs are integrally related to views about the appropriate role for religion in the public sphere. Therefore, they cannot be understood apart from national histories, religious demography, and geography.

Because I am the only Orthodox Christian to serve thus far on the commission, Orthodox Christianity has now been included amongst the multiple religious voices involved in U.S. foreign policy efforts to end religious persecution by building formal and informal mechanisms to safeguard every individual's rights of belief, conscience, and worship as enshrined in international human rights treaties and covenants.[4] My service has challenged me to greater personal reflection on a question that has informed my academic research and policy work on religion, democracy, and security: How can Orthodoxy respond to the conceptual and operational complexities of protecting human rights in an ever more religiously plural world?

To answer the above question, I have returned repeatedly to the textual resources of Orthodox theology, which offer sophisticated insights into notions of human freedom and individual and collective rights (articulated in christological and eucharistic terms). Likewise, I have researched patristic discourses on social justice and

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[4]The foundational agreements of a broad set of international human rights architectures that protect religious freedom are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The latter document is based on the former, and is a U.N. treaty that was created in 1966 and that entered into force in 1976. Signatory countries to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are bound by it.

environmental stewardship. As complement, my scholarly research has involved critical, comparative analysis of the complex historical and contemporary record of Orthodox churches in the face of state oppression of human rights—for example, under totalitarian and authoritarian systems such as those of the Soviet Union during the Cold War or Greece's military *junta* from 1967–1974, and in response to post-Cold War military actions undertaken in the name of human rights protection, such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

My recent USCIRF visits to Russia and Turkey were especially suggestive of the relevance of religious freedom to Orthodox churches today. In both cases, Orthodox churches are situated in states with weak capacity for addressing the legal, political, and social complexities associated with liberal democracy and religious pluralism. In the former case, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Moscow struggle to articulate a theologically based model of human rights that will help the church overcome the twin legacies of martyrdom and penetration by the Soviets. In the latter case, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has drawn on Orthodox theology and practice to support global human rights initiatives, and likewise, to seek international support to end the legal, economic, and security deprivations of a Turkish state that has nearly eliminated the Greek Orthodox presence in Turkey.

Therefore, this essay is a personal reflection provoked by my work as a scholar-practitioner preoccupied with matters of religion and international relations, and above all, by my identity as an Orthodox Christian. Consequently, the essay also grows out of my mild sense of disquiet about the relative silence within the Orthodox Christian community in America[5] regarding matters of religious freedom and human rights, particularly as these relate to the

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[5] I use this term to encompass Orthodox churches of all jurisdictions in the United States.

U.S. role in the world today and in terms of Orthodox perspectives on challenges to global peace.

The perception of silence may be erroneous, but nonetheless, worthy of consideration, because it is puzzling. After all, Orthodox churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world participate in various ecumenical and inter-faith initiatives, international institutions, and pan-Orthodox structures[6] that, taken together, reflect more than a rhetorical commitment to human rights. Yet, at the same time, a review of the curricula at Orthodox theological schools in the United States reveals a remarkably limited spectrum of coursework in the social sciences and public policy, with almost no systematic attention to human rights, religious freedom, international law, social and distributive justice, or democracy. Likewise, such issues are largely absent from the publications of the two major Orthodox seminary presses in America.[7]

Does relative silence by Orthodox Christians in America on matters of religious freedom and human rights, and, more generally,

[6]Orthodox churches participate, for example, in the World Council of Churches, the World Conference on Religions and Peace, the United Nations Millennium Project, the Helsinki Commission, and the International Orthodox Christian Charities.

[7]A review of articles published in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* and *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, as well as the book titles published by the Holy Cross Orthodox Press and St Vladimir's Seminary Press, is suggestive: journal articles and books that consider the links between religion and world affairs, religion and peace, religion and violence, religion and human rights, from an Orthodox perspective, are comparably few in number. The exception to this trend is the clear concern on mission and missiology as public witness, and to a lesser extent, on ethics and public theology. However, when one compares the scholarship (by both lay academics and academically trained clergy and hierarchs) in the Protestant and Catholic traditions that explores the links between religion and contemporary international affairs, particularly as this relates to questions of religious freedom and human rights, the absence of attention to these matters in Orthodox sources is striking.

on issues of international relations, indicate that these are not directly relevant to Orthodox theology? I reject such a proposition and, instead, accept the claim of Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos that "[t]he human enterprise as a whole and the salvation of the entire world remain the fundamental themes of Holy Scripture."[8] Consequently, religious freedom and human rights are crucial, both ". . . as theological questions . . . and . . . as part of the broader search for an Orthodox response to modern problems of global concern."[9]

As effort to contribute to a theologically grounded view of religious freedom in contemporary international relations, in this essay I address three related issues. In Part One, I summarize the current historical moment regarding the religious dimensions of human rights, focusing on the human rights paradoxes that have emerged with the concomitant resurgence of democracy and religion in world affairs. In Part Two, I consider possible responses by the religious actors who are trying to remedy these paradoxes. In Part Three, I situate the Orthodox within the context of the phenomenon of proselytism, which has emerged as one of the most unanticipated legal and practical achievements of religious freedom in our time. Here, I consider Orthodox interpretations of evangelism as possible remedies to the joint failure by both secular human rights theory and religious thought to address effectively the demonstrated potential conflict that is associated with proselytism.

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[8]Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns*, trans. Pavlos Gottfried (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 13.

[9]Ibid.

## A SYNOPSIS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

The current historical moment in religious freedom and international relations has been compellingly captured by John Witte, Jr., scholar of law, ethics and religion. He maintains that the last quarter century is a "Dickensian era ... [wherein we] have seen the best of human rights protections inscribed on the books, but some of the worst human rights violations inflicted on the ground."[10]

Building on the first generation of human rights laws formulated in the aftermath of the Second World War, a second generation of human rights architectures has emerged over the past 20 years. Moving from declarations to implementation mechanisms, the second generation included more than 150 major new statutes and constitutional provisions on religious freedom in both international human rights law and various state constitutions. Noteworthy for their focus on religious freedom are the 1981 UN Declaration on Religious Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief, the long catalogue of religious group rights set out in the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document and its progeny, and America's passage of the IRFA.[11] Most of these legal changes have been built

[10]John Witte, Jr., "A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Contributions," in *God's Joust, God's Justice: Law and Religion in the Western Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 63.

[11]For a useful summary of international and local legal documents on religious liberty, see Natan Lerner, *Religion, Belief, and International Human Rights* 129–47 (2000); and *Religion and Human Rights: Basic Documents* (Tad Stahnke and J. Paul Martin, eds., 1998). For representative discussions on the emergence of religious freedom provisions in international, regional, and national human rights architectures during the last quarter century, see Johan D. van der Vyver and John Witte, Jr., eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Religious*

on normative commitments to the protection of freedom of conscience and practice; guarantees of religious pluralism, equality, and non-discrimination; and other types of special protections and entitlements for religious individuals and religious groups. Equally important, these human rights architectures reflect the clear commitment to preventing violence against or in the name of religion.

Against this remarkable expansion in the international and national architectures, however, is striking empirical evidence (reflected in even a cursory review of international media) of violations of religious freedom that cut across confessional, regional, and state boundaries. A short list includes communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in India, sectarian fratricide between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, persecution of Orthodox Christians and rising anti-Semitism in Turkey, attacks on Muslim girls in France for wearing headscarves to school, anti-Muslim hate crimes in the U.S. in the aftermath of the al Qaeda terrorist attacks on 9/11, and arbitrary arrests and torture of Buddhists and Falun Gong followers by state authorities in China.

What explains this paradoxical Dickensian moment in religious human rights? The twin phenomena of globalization and democratization offer helpful answers. Taken together, they have created a contemporary religious pluralism that is unique compared to previous historical episodes of religious diversity and differentiation.[12]

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*Perspectives* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Klewer Law International, 1996) and Johan D. van de Vyver and John Witte, Jr., eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Legal Perspectives* (The Hague, The Netherlands: Klewer Law International, 2000).

[12]Philip Jenkins refers to the current historical expression of religious pluralism, particularly in terms of the features within Christianity, as ". . . one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide." See his work on *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 2.

Furthermore, the internal logic and possible consequences of this new religious pluralism, above all, explain the Dickensian paradox of the current human rights architectures meant to protect religious freedom.

Although a wide variety of specialized and popular uses of the terms "globalization" and "democratization" exists, these are phenomena with clearly discernable features. "Globalization" refers to those economic, political, cultural, and military processes that are determinately shaped by the acute compression of time and space,[13] due to advances in technologies of communication, transportation, and force. "Democratization" is an open-ended, contingent process with material and qualitative aspects that give primacy to and are informed by principles of equality and freedom.[14]

How have globalization and democratization contributed to a pluralization of the religious field in contemporary international

[13]James H. Mittelman, *The Globalization Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance*, 4. For useful readers that encompass the diversity of conceptual and operational uses of the concept of globalization, see John Beynon and David Dunkerley, eds., *Globalization: The Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), and David Held and Anthony McGrew, eds., *The Global Transformations Reader: An Introduction to the Globalization Debate* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2003 edition).

[14]There is general consensus amongst scholars about the need to distinguish between the meaning versus the process of democracy or, more specifically, between substantive versus procedural conceptions of democracy. The literature on democratization is expansive; representative treatments that explicate the conceptual challenges associated with the study of and relationship between democracy and democratization are those by Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*; Richard Bunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, and Hans-Jurgen Puhle, eds., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*; David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*; David Held, *Models of Democracy*; and Gary Marks and Larry Diamond, eds., *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset*.

relations? Regarding globalization, a few examples are instructive. Globalizing technologies of communication and transportation (for example, the internet, text messages, real-time television coverage, air and rail travel) have created intense interpretive contests over the meaning and application of religious messages. Such disputes about theological doctrine, whether expressed directly or in mediated form, necessarily imply further contests over religious authority. Resolution of interpretive differences depends on compelling arguments about textual sources and experiential events—theological arguments transmitted and diffused through media technologies that, eventually, help either to establish or to discredit religious leaders.

Of course, the strength of religious authority ultimately depends on the ability of leaders to gain the support of believers and to change outcomes. Globalizing technologies are crucial to the allocation of human capital (whether through travel or via virtual activity) and the transmission of financial capital, such that resource flows can induce changes in behaviors and outcomes. In sum, globalization expands the parameters for religious interpretation, multiplies contenders for religious authority, and therefore, contributes to reconfigurations in decision-making and operations within religious institutions.

Democratization intensifies, reinforces, and distinctively expands the pluralizing effects of globalization on religion. Because its discourse, institutions, and processes are premised on axioms of equality and freedom, democratization ensures that religious belief and practice operate according to the principle of choice. Accordingly, religious belief (as well as non-belief, in the form of exit from belief and/or belonging)[15] becomes volitional, rather than a matter

[15]The importance of choice and volition in helping to conceptualize and measure levels of religiosity that distinguish between belief versus belonging

of inherited and immutable identity; likewise, religious practices become matters of discussion and debate, rather than fixed expressions of doctrine.

Notably, democratic norms of equality and freedom disrupt hierarchies of religious order by creating conditions whereby all individuals demand a voice in the internal life of the religious community and in the religious community's engagement in public life. Consequently, democratic ideas and practices challenge the authority of religious leaders, whose status increasingly depends on performance standards that extend beyond transcendental criteria of truth to include secular criteria of transparency and accountability.

In short, democratization and globalization are revolutionizing religion in the contemporary world, through pluralizing effects that political scientist Alfred Stepan has characterized as the "multi-vocality" of religion.[16] Today's particular form of religious pluralism is both ideational and practical in nature. It also operates both vertically and horizontally, cutting across confessional and denominational lines and operating at the domestic and external levels of states.

Above all, today's new religious pluralism is defined by a hegemonic logic of competition[17] whose consequences can be summed up in three main features that dramatically alter the range of possibilities for religion in public life: first, changes in the legal-constitutional

has been brilliantly explored in the work of Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) and D. Hervieiu-Leger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans. Simon Lee (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[16] Alfred Stepan, "Religion, Democracy and the 'Twin Tolerations'" *Journal of Democracy* 11.4 (2000): 44.

[17] Useful compendia, offering diverse disciplinary and methodological treatments of the competitive logic that defines contemporary religious pluralism, are those by Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005); Diana Eck, *A New Religious America: How A Christian Country Has Become the*

relationship between religion and state; second, reconfigurations in relations of power within religious institutional structures; and third, changes in modes of engagement across religious boundaries.

This competitive logic, in turn, provides insight into the gap between theory and praxis when it comes to religious human rights. Succinctly put, the origins and consequences of contemporary religious pluralism present complex, intriguing transformational opportunities vis-à-vis the structures of our system of international relations. Responses to these opportunities (which some actors perceive as threats) generate the Dickensian paradox of religious human rights.

State responses to religious pluralism have had an especially defensive quality that has complicated the protection of religious human rights. Globalization and democratization have enabled religions to function in what anthropologist Suzanne Hoeber Rudolph defines as a liminal space ". . . that cuts across inside/outside, a space that is neither within the state nor an aspect of the international system but animates both."[18] This "in-between" operational space for religion has effectively decoupled religious activity, affiliation, and identity from direct state control, so that states increasingly tend to view contemporary religious pluralism as a threat to state sovereignty, defined as the absolute control over territory. Indeed, the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (whose-ever region, his religion)[19] formalized in the seventeenth century at the

*World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002); and Lawrence A. Young, ed., *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[18]"Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society," in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion & Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 1.

[19]Although established by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, this principle was formalized in what is understood as the origins of the (modern) state system,

Peace of Westphalia, meant that states determined the role of religion in public life and the religious identity of nationalism. Therefore, states agreed that sovereignty prohibited external intervention in domestic religious (and, in fact, all other) affairs.

States have developed extreme ambivalence to human rights architectures that establish the universality of religious freedom and that detach religious activity from territory. These new features of international relations are viewed by states as a direct threat to sovereignty and, therefore, to global order. Consequently, states are resorting to arguments about compelling state interest[20] to justify limitations on religious human rights, in an effort to reinforce the conventions of sovereignty that have organized the international system for more than four centuries. Concrete state measures—which are increasingly justified in terms of the global "war against terror"—designed to constrain religious activity include constitutional amendments, law enforcement legislation, and educational policies. The effects of these measures sometimes lead to violations of religious freedom.

Moreover, contemporary religious pluralism has led states to "instrumentalize" religion, for purposes of domestic nation-build-

with the Peace Treaties of Westphalia in 1648. A comprehensive study of the links between state and religion as established under the Westphalian order is the study by Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations.* Witte discusses the origins and evolution of the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* on p. 19 in his paper "A Dickensian Era of Religious Rights: An Update on Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective," delivered as the keynote address at the Conference on Religion and Violence held at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, MA, October 2005).

[20] For discussions of the principle of compelling state interest as this relates to state limitations on the role of religion in public life, see Johan D. van der Vyver and John Witte, Jr., eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Legal Perspectives.*

ing or for purposes of foreign-policy activity. The collapse of Yugoslavia after the Cold War offers a classic case. The state attempted, under the control of Slobodan Milosevic, to employ religion (in this case, Serbian Orthodox Christianity) for purposes of exclusivist nationalism in the face of the state's failure to provide basic economic, political, and security rights for all of the country's citizens regardless of confessional identity. Similarly, parliamentary discussions in the Netherlands about restrictive immigration laws, and the French secularism law of 2004 that prohibits conspicuous religious dress by public-school students, have reflected state moves to use a security logic to define national identity in exclusivist (in these cases, non-Islamic) religious terms. Finally, in the five-plus years since the 2001 terrorist attacks on America, President George W. Bush has utilized a religiously laden (in this case, Evangelical Christian)[21] discourse to formulate a worldview aimed to legitimize U.S. foreign policy interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and, most recently, Somalia.

Lamentable in the current international system are the competitive, pluralizing activities of religious actors that have facilitated the use of violence in the name of religion. Also important to recognize is the active cooperation between states and religious groups that conflate religious particularity and national identity in a manner that limits religious pluralism in the public sphere. Regardless of the origins and intentions of such religion-state collaborations, the consequences for religious freedom are oftentimes negative.

In sum, the dynamics of globalization and democratization have generated a new religious pluralism with confounding results for religious freedom in the contemporary world order. Paradoxically,

[21]For a relevant summary, see Andrew C. Bacevich and Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "God Is Not Neutral: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy After 9/11" *Orbis* (Winter 2004).

the expanded parameters for religious activity, which are the products of globalizing and democratizing forces, are causing boomerang responses by states (and, sometimes, religions) that lead to violations of religious human rights.

## A RELIGIOUS VOICE IN POSSIBLE REMEDIES TO CURRENT LIMITATIONS ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

What are plausible remedies to weaknesses in the current generation of human rights architectures regarding religious freedom? More specifically, what can—what should—we anticipate from religions as a meaningful contribution to improve protections in religious freedom?

For one, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos charges that churches must maintain "their essential role as critic"[22] when it comes to fulfilling their transformative responsibility in the world. His position complements John Witte's proposition that improvements in the protection of religious freedom can most effectively be won when religions move to ". . . reclaim their own voice within the secular human rights dialogue, and reclaim the human rights voice within their own religious dialogues."[23]

The historical record of the twentieth century underscores the limits of secularist hegemony to prevent and respond to violations of human rights and religious freedom. Dogmatic secularism in the form of the ideologies of fascism and communism, as well as under the general rubrics of secular nationalism, produced crimes against humanity during WWI, WWII, and the Cold War.[24] Especially

[22]Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Facing the World*, 16.
[23]John Witte, *God's Joust, God's Justice*, 5.
[24]A powerful exploration of the massive violations of human rights and

insidious in its negative effects has been the application of the Jacobin model of *laicite*,[25] which, while originating in France, has been reformulated in the religious freedom laws of Turkey and China.[26] In myriad formulations customized to national circumstances, *laicite* has evolved as a model for regulating relations between the state and religion—either to marginalize religion or, at the very least, to render religious activity in public life subordinate to state control. For empirical evidence, consider the severe limitations on religious belief and practice in (secular, communist) China; the systematic violations of religious minority rights in (secular) Turkey; and the limits on free worship, movement, and work rights for Muslim and Christian minorities in (secular) Israel.

The secularist conviction ". . . that religious institutions and values should play no role in the temporal affairs of the nation-state"[27]

religious freedom associated with secular nationalism is the work by Samantha Powers, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003).

[25]The French concept of *laicite* is based not only on the institutional separation of state and religion, but equally important, expresses the normative conviction that the state's complete independence from and, therefore, control over religion is necessary for political and social order. For an excellent source of bibliographical references and discussions related to the concept, see http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent_frame/.

[26]For discussions of the violations of human rights and, more broadly, limitations on democracy that frequently result from applying aggressive secularism to the relationship between state and religion, see Nikkie R. Keddie, "The New Religious Politics: Where, When, and Why Do 'Fundamentalisms' Appear?" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (October 1998); Elizabeth H. Prodromou, "Turkey Between Secularism and Fundamentalism? The 'Muslimhood Model' and the Greek Orthodox Minority" *The Brandywine Review of Faith & International Affairs* (Spring 2005); and M. Hakan Yavuz, "The Case of Turkey" *Daedalus*, Vol. 132, No. 3 (Summer 2003).

[27]Nikki R. Keddie, "Secularism & Its Discontents" *Daedalus*, Vol. 132, No. 3 (Summer 2003): 14.

originated in Western European countries with dominant Roman Catholic traditions. Yet, this perspective undergirds much of the human rights frameworks currently operative in nation-states. Moreover, secularist assumptions have long held sway as the dominant philosophical and ideological perspective in the U.S. foreign policy establishment and in public intellectual environments, such as universities, think tanks, and the media.[28]

These widely acknowledged limits of secularism in human rights theory and practice have led many lay and religious leaders from various traditions (as well as public policymakers from non-religious contexts) to support greater religious voice and action in formulating religious freedom legislation and institutions. However, in taking this exhortation seriously, we must recognize the risks for religions that come with expanded engagement in international and national human rights contexts. Without a doubt, the greatest caveat would be to avoid the emphasis on what could be termed Westphalianism: a state-centered, territorialized, securitized conception that has characterized state responses to contemporary religious pluralism.

Arguably, inherent in all three Christian denominations—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant—is a warning against West-

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[28]There is a superb, and growing, literature on this issue. An excellent point of departure is Daniel Philpott's article in *World Politics*, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations," in *World Politics* 55 (October 2002), which includes excellent references on the subject. For representative discussions of the reasons for and changes in the dominance of secularism in U.S. policy, media, and academic contexts that deal with human rights and religious freedom, see John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens, eds., *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2003); Douglas Johnston, ed., *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover, eds., *Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004).

phalianism, in the form of Christ's injunction to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's.[29] This biblical directive offers a cautionary guide to churches to reject collaboration and/or cooperation with states that may limit religious human rights of free belief, conscience, and practice, whether in individual or collective terms. Unfortunately, ample historical evidence suggests that churches have fallen into the traps of Westphalianism in their responses to religious pluralism, mainly by seeking to gain monopoly standing, whether formally or informally, through state sanction.[30]

Especially striking—and worrisome for their corrosive effects on churches' abilities to play a transformative role in the world—are myriad efforts by religious groups to appeal to mechanisms of state power in order to gain monopoly rights under the highly particularized, competitive conditions of contemporary religious pluralization. As historian Philip Jenkins points out, "religious loyalties are at the root of many of the world's ongoing civil wars and political violence."[31] Churches must stand as critics of—rather than as handmaidens to—state actions that employ religion in the name of exclusivist nationalism, thereby producing communal violence[32] and violating religious freedom. Equally important,

[29]Mt 22.15–22.

[30]For an intriguing discussion of Judas' messianic religio-nationalist views as reflected in the politicization of religion and the use of religion for purposes of exclusivist nationalism, see Panteleimon Kalaitzidis, "The Temptation of Judas: Church and National Identities" *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 47.1–4 (2002): 357–79.

[31]Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 163.

[32]A useful sampling of works dealing with the violent consequences attending to the conflation of religious identity with nationalism are studies of wars of secession from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. See G. Scott Davis, ed., *Religion and Justice in the War over Bosnia* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Paul Mojzes, ed., *Religion and the War in Bosnia* (Oxford, England: An Ameri-

churches must improve their awareness of, and responses to, state laws that constrain the legal personality and property rights of individuals, communities, and institutions defined in religious terms;[33] religions must guard against cooperation with states in the execution of religious registration and association laws, taxation and inheritance structures, as well as administrative and usage strictures that indiscriminately privilege one religious group over others.

In short, rather than turning to the state to resolve their ambivalence to today's new religious pluralism, churches must retain their autonomy from the state and, instead, concentrate on engagement in civil society. Such engagement necessitates avoiding a dependence on Caesar and, instead, contributing to the discourse and processes that shape civil action and that hold states accountable to their citizens. Only thus can churches efficaciously correct human rights violations caused by state failures to address needs of economic justice, public health, and human security.

can Academy of Religions Book, 1998) ; and Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols: Religion and Nationalism in Yugoslav States* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[33]There is a rich comparative literature on questions of legal personality and property rights as related to freedom of belief and practice, and instructive sources include Peter G. Danchin and Elizabeth A. Cole, eds., *Protecting the Human Rights of Religious Minorities in Eastern Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Tore Lindholm, Cole Durham, Jr., Bahia G. Tahzib-Lie, Elizabeth A. Sewell, and Lena Larsen, eds., *Facilitating Freedom of Religion or Belief: A Deskbook* (Boston: Martin Nijhoff Publishers, 2004); Johan D. van der Vyver and John Witte, Jr., eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Religious Perspectives*, and Johan D. van der Vyver and John Witte, Jr. eds., *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Legal Perspectives.*

## FOCUS ON ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE ISSUE OF PROSELYTISM

How do we situate Orthodox Christianity within the context of current problems in, and possible responses to, the protection of human rights and, specifically, religious freedom? What are specifically Orthodox contributions to a theologically grounded view of religious freedom? May we suggest that the specificities of Orthodox theology can offer particular strengths and insights into the best means for conceptualizing and operationalizing the third generation of human rights architectures as they relate to religious freedom?

The phenomenon of proselytism offers a fascinating case that allows for some preliminary answers to the above questions and, especially, that makes clear the capacity of Orthodoxy to enrich the " . . . new 'human rights hermeneutic' [that] is slowly beginning to emerge among modern religions."[34] Proselytism is one of the most urgent and divisive issues confronting international and national laws and institutions aimed at protecting religious freedom. Proselytism is intrinsically related to democratization and globalization as the motor forces for contemporary religious pluralism. Furthermore, proselytism presents complicated challenges to the Westphalian notion of sovereignty. After all, missionary activities raise questions about the hegemony of national identity over religious forms of collective identification, since salvation is not tied to the state. Similarly, proselytizing activities by a religious community whose origin is not defined by the state reduce the relevance of territorial borders, thereby relativizing state control.

A snapshot of existing international human rights instruments illustrates the ambiguity regarding proselytism as related to religious freedom as a fundamental human right. Article 18 of the Universal

[34]Ibid., 6.

Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that " . . . the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion . . . includes [the] freedom to change [one's] religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest [one's] religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."[35]

In contrast, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) omits mention of the freedom to change one's religion, and instead, states:

> . . . everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.[36]

Finally, Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981) eliminates reference to the right to adopt a religion or belief of one's choice. Instead, the document stipulates:

> Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.[37]

[35]A complete reproduction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is found in Tad Stahnke and J. Paul Martin, eds., *Religion and Human Rights*.
[36]See ibid.
[37]See ibid.

The above three instruments form the canon of first- and second-generation international human rights law on religious freedom. All three documents, however, are unclear on three related questions that have implications for proselytism: Is religious freedom a universal or culturally relative right? Are rights understood in individual or group terms? Does religious freedom include both the right to change, and the right not to change, one's religion?

Until now, the international human rights community has failed to build a consistent record of response to proselytizing activities as they relate to each of these questions. Consequently, responses usually have been developed at the level of national human rights legislation, although appeals against national laws dealing with religious freedom almost uniformly occur within the context of international institutions.

Despite the lack of clarity and resolution by secular voices in international human rights law regarding proselytism, religions are actively and consciously struggling to find their voice on this provocative issue. Both within and across confessional lines, religions have begun to view the right to proselytize as not uniformly and axiomatically consistent with religious freedom. However, great disagreement across confessional lines, as well as intense internal denominational debate, exists about the relationship between proselytism and religious freedom. While clearly recognizing the power of the state in shaping the parameters for proselytizing activity, religions have differed on how to view the state: as "impartial arbiter" to protect rights of proselytism for all groups, or as "power broker" for preventing proselytism by some groups?[38]

[38]Natan Lerner speaks about the turn towards the state, in the face of deficits in human rights law, by religions seeking to prevent proselytism. See *Proselytism, Change of Religion, and International Human Rights* (International Religious Liberty Association), www.irla.org/documents/articles/lerner-prose-

The competitive logic of contemporary religious pluralism demands that all religions produce a studied, thoughtful, and ultimately, theologically responsible response concerning appropriate parameters for sharing one's faith—in a manner that produces peaceful, rather than violent and oppressive, transformation in the world. However, the problematic of proselytism, as affecting religious freedom, is particularly acute for Christianity, because of Christ's commission to "go, teach, baptize and make disciples of all people as followers of Jesus Christ."[39] As B.B. Beach points out, "[e]vangelistic mission is an inescapable mandate of Christianity."[40] Therefore, Christianity faces a direct challenge in its contribution toward new ways of interpreting human rights. It must address the tension between, on the one hand, the right to believe and manifest, as well as to change and not to change, one's religion; and on the other hand, proselytism as an activity that has demonstrated potential to compromise individual and group freedom of religion.

Not surprisingly, a critical re-theorizing of proselytism especially and centrally concerns Orthodox Christian scholars and practitioners. The collapse of state socialist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe created the conditions not only for a general rediscovery of religion in former atheistic states, but for proselytizing activities by church missionary groups largely associated with evangelical Protestantism and, secondarily, with Catholicism. The

lytism.html. An excellent comparative treatment of the problematic of proselytism within the context of human rights law and the consequences for religious freedom is the work by John Witte, Jr. and Richard C. Martin, eds., *Sharing the Book: Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

39 Mt 28.19–20.

40 B.B. Beach, "Evangelism and Proselytism: Religious Liberty and Ecumenical Challenges," website of the International Religious Liberty Association (http://www.irla.org/documents/articles/bbbeach-proselytism.html): 1.

negative reactions of Orthodox churches in these regions to religious pluralism has been largely a defensive reaction against what Ion Bria characterizes as the cultural imperialism of proselytism. Such imperialism is reflected both in the Protestant commitment to "Christianize" Europe and also in the Catholic claim to recover historic jurisdictional rights.[41] Orthodox churches turned to state authority ". . . to prevent [what they viewed as] foreign churches from attempting to attract converts from the local population."[42]

However, in turn, state protection against missionary activities by non-Orthodox churches has begun to produce a notable backlash amongst Orthodox Christians. Orthodox are concerned about the corrosive effects of state intervention and collaboration on the capacity of Orthodox churches to function as eucharistic, transformative communities. Most interesting about this backlash against a state-centric response to proselytism is that democratization and globalization have shaped the nature of the response itself. Specifically, while initially driven by the exigencies of a pluralist, competitive religious environment in post-totalitarian states, the debate has expanded to be global in scope and democratic (that is, participatory) in nature.

Scholars of Orthodoxy, in particular, have begun tentative, yet discernible, systematic explorations of possible responses to religious pluralism. Similarly, Orthodox churches, including ordained and lay actors, have begun to conceptualize the emerging opportunities and challenges in terms of religious and social pluralism and democratic politics. A glance at scholarly literature, as well as websites and blogs, demonstrates that these debates are lively, highly

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[41]Ion Bria, "Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania: An Orthodox Point of View" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 36, Issue 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1999): 163–84.

[42]Lerner, *Proselytism*, 1.

contested, inter-disciplinary, and multi-national; they involve Orthodox Christians from democratic (e.g. North America, Europe), proto-democratic and authoritarian (e.g. Turkey), and newly democratic (e.g. Russia, Ukraine) societies.

Notwithstanding an impressive multi-vocality, Orthodox Christians within the debate have begun to converge in their critique of proselytism: they consider it a violation of religious freedom on the basis of international human rights law. One consequence has been Orthodox participation in ecumenical and inter-faith efforts to develop interpretive alternatives to proselytism.[43] In developing an alternative to dominant conceptions of proselytism, Orthodox thinkers concur with non-Orthodox theologians, such as Veli-Matti Karkkainen and Konrad Raiser, that ". . . the problem of proselytism has not received much attention from theologians . . . [and that the problem is not simply] . . . part of other 'housekeeping' issues, [but instead] . . . concerns the very ecclesiality of the church, that is, on what conditions a church can be *called* a church with the right, if any, to proclaim the gospel to others."[44] Orthodox thinkers also share those Catholic and Protestant critiques that regard proselytism as ". . . an 'evangelization' that betrays unworthy and non-respectful attitudes towards the 'objects' of evangelization and does not honor human freedom."[45]

Distinctive in Orthodox discussions vis-à-vis Catholic and Protestant claims about every church's "right to evangelize"[46] is

[43]See Anna Marie Aagaard, "Proselytism and Privacy: Some Reflections on the Tantur Conference on Religious Freedom" *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 50 (1988): 464–71.

[44]Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Proselytism and Church Relations: Theological Issues Facing Older and Younger Churches" *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 52 (July 2000): 383.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid. This article offers a very useful synopsis of Catholic and evangelical Protestant perspectives on proselytism versus evangelism.

their view that evangelism as an activity—more specifically, as a competitive activity whose most extreme outcome is the "war for souls"[47]—violates the theological ideal of a unified Church. In this view, proselytism becomes a ". . . terrible caricature of evangelism, a kind of counterwitness."[48]

Orthodox thinkers have begun the work of an ambitious interpretive project regarding proselytism. They are returning to theological sources and the lived experience of the Church in order to rediscover an authentic notion of evangelism that is not ". . . a strictly 'confessional' (i.e. Orthodox) point of view, but [is instead a reflection of] . . . the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church'—in other words, what the ecclesially and ecumenically 'Orthodox' approach to mission and proselytism should be"[49] in order to express "ecumenism in time."[50]

What are the outlines of an Orthodox interpretation of evangelism? One point of departure is that evangelism as mission is not simply something that the Church *does*, but ". . . is something related to the nature of the Church, that is, to what the Church *is*."[51]

[47]This is Philip Jenkins' formulation in his assessment of the globalization of Christianity. See *The Next Christendom*.

[48]Petros Vassiliadis, "Mission and Proselytism: An Orthodox Understanding," p. 45 in *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998).

[49]Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 29.

[50]This is the formulation of one of Orthodox Christianity's most creative and influential thinkers, Georges Florovsky, who was a pioneer in the modern ecumenical movement. For reference to and explanation of the term, see George H. Williams, "The Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Georges Florovsky," in Andrew Blane, ed., *Georges Florovsky: Russian Intellectual and Orthodox Churchman* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973).

[51]Athanasios (Thanasis) N. Papathanasiou, *Future, the Background of History: Essays on Church Mission in an Age of Globalization* (Montreal, Canada: Alexander Press, 2005), 13.

Consequently, Orthodox thinkers propose that mission, or public witness, be a dynamic, historicized event by which the Church creates the possibility for what Athanasios Papathanasiou calls ". . . an all-embracing innovation . . . [by which] the entire creation will finally become new, in communion with God."[52] Accordingly, the Church, through evangelism, undergoes a continuous process of self-transformation that, simultaneously, invites the world to accept the gospel message and to move towards the kind of reconciliation that offers the possibility for human salvation.

Especially crucial to existential and legal matters of religious freedom is the contingent acceptance of the Church's invitation—what Papathanasiou calls "the adventure of freedom in history."[53] Although those within the Church have accepted the invitation of the gospel message, the world's response, above all, must include the foundational existential condition of freedom. This centrality of freedom is complemented and reinforced by a range of scholarship, based on scriptural and patristic references dealing with far-ranging issues: ecclesiology, anthropology, social justice, and conflict resolution.[54]

The centrality of freedom as the key to creating new social relations creates rich possibilities for an Orthodox alternative to the conventional interpretation of proselytism as axiomatically compatible and consistent with religious freedom. Interestingly, such an Orthodox alternative view of proselytism resonates with existing points of

[52]Papathanasiou, *Future*, 23.

[53]Ibid., 26.

[54]A representative sampling of, by now, classic Orthodox works on these subjects include Gennadios Limouris, ed., *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation: Insights from Orthodoxy* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990); Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984); and John D. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

consensus in international human rights law. Specifically, international human rights law, as well as judicial decisions of legal bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, distinguish between proper and improper proselytism and, likewise, indicate the possibility for a morally defensible position that supports state limitations on improper proselytism.[55]

Judicial decisions about improper proselytism focus on two factors: means and intentions. Generally, improper proselytism involves missionary activities that ". . . are related to the existence of coercion, material enticement, and/or violation of privacy,"[56] and that may include "intimidation, . . . bribery,"[57] and in some cases, "may even entail the use of violence or brain-washing."[58] The illegitimacy of proselytism derives from the mechanisms used to evangelize. Equally important, improper proselytism utilizes the aforementioned mechanisms toward the goal of ". . . gaining new members of a church."[59] Nonetheless, while human rights architectures have identified illegitimate means and objectives as intrinsic to improper proselytism, theological bases for rejecting improper proselytism as ". . . a corruption or deformation of [true evangelism]"[60] remain strikingly underdeveloped.

[55]Useful summaries of international human rights architectures, associated regional judicial institutions, and international organizations that distinguish between proper and improper proselytism are found in the works by Natan Lerner, "Proselytism, Change of Religion and International Human Rights" *Emory International Law Review* 12 (1998): 477–561" and Johan D. van der Vyver, "Religious Freedom and Proselytism" *The Ecumenical Review* Vol. 50.4 (October 1998): 417–71.

[56]Lerner, *Proselytism*, 483.

[57]Ibid., 496.

[58]Ibid., 551.

[59]Ibid.

[60]van der Vyver, *Religious Freedom*, 425.

By building on the foundational importance of freedom, Orthodox thinkers may move towards a specific model of evangelism—the eucharistic community. This type of community model could richly address the limits (means and intentions) of proselytism, precisely by offering a model for public witness in a religiously plural world.

To argue that the eucharistic model is the hegemonic Orthodox model for evangelism would be an overstatement. Also, Orthodox thinkers have begun a lively debate about the competing utility of "eucharistic," "Trinitarian," and most recently, what John Behr calls the "eschatological," models of mission.[61] Nonetheless, Orthodox thinkers widely support the paradigm of the eucharistic community. Equally significant, this concept resonates with non-Orthodox thinkers currently engaged with the problematic of proselytism.

A brief overview of the main features of the eucharistic community model illustrates its potential richness. Specifically, the model balances the right to public witness with other rights of religious freedom, and offers indicators for the realization of tolerance—the hallmark of religious freedom in a religiously plural world. Petros Vassiliadis, who supports the eucharistic model for evangelism, claims this model recaptures the multiple understandings of Christian mission that are developed in the New Testament: the informative mission (imparting the message to others), the educational

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[61] A useful summary of competing conceptual approaches to mission that have developed in debates amongst Orthodox scholar-practitioners is found in Vassiliadis (see ch. 3, "The Eucharistic Perspective of the Church's Mission," *Eucharist and Witness*). For an extensive discussion of the comparative merits of the eschatological model in this regard, see John Behr, "The Eschatological Dimensions of the Church," paper at the Fourth Consultation: Orthodox and Wesleyan Spirituality (St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, January 2006), in *Orthodox and Wesleyan Ecclesiology*, ed. ST Kimbrough, Jr. (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007).

mission (providing the message to allow individuals to make moral decisions), and the apologetic mission (seeking political recognition of the right to express one's faith).[62]

These three aspects of mission suggest how the eucharistic community model moves beyond the lack of clarity in extant international human rights architectures. They also suggest how the eucharistic model provides resolution to the tension between proselytism currently conceived and religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

First, an emphasis on the Trinitarian dimension of the eucharistic model promotes the dynamics of love, freedom, and equality, thereby disqualifying conversion as the intention, or goal, of mission. Not incidentally, the anthropology of communal love among distinct persons—an express image of the Holy Trinity—resolves the tension between individual versus group notions of human rights and religious freedom.

Second, the eucharistic community is experiential, so the Church replicates the liturgical experience in the everyday life of church activities. Constant reference to the liturgy implies that evangelical activities must demonstrate tolerance for other worldviews and respect the ultimate freedom of individuals and groups to embrace (or reject) the evangelical message.

Third, and finally, the eucharistic community is eschatological, continually seeking the Coming Christ. Tying eschatology to the concrete realities of public witness could reconcile the tension between religious freedom as a universal versus a culturally relative right. An eschatological sensibility could also allow belief and practice to form in diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, an eschatological emphasis accounts for the transfiguring capacity of a community, whereby its missionary activity becomes unbound from

[62]Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 30–31.

historically static definitions of religious freedom that are empirically meaningless in today's religiously plural world.

In sum, an Orthodox model of eucharistic community points to some compelling possibilities for evangelism that would balance the right to public witness with the right to protect one's faith against intrusion and coercion. Today, Orthodox Christians experience conditions of impressive religious freedom (the multiple Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States); conditions of egregious religious persecution (the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox community in Turkey); and conditions of complex transition (the cases of Orthodox Christians in Russia, Iraq, and China as different, yet instructive). The diversity of experience, and the riches of Orthodox theology, provides ample resources to further develop guidelines and models for evangelism. More broadly, Orthodox Christian theological resources make possible responsible engagement with a pressing issue of our world—the protection of religious freedom as a fundamental human right. All religions must become aware of this issue, and act upon it, in order to mitigate the Dickensian paradox of human rights that presents an urgent challenge to our human survival.

# FOUR TYPES OF "ORTHOPRAXY" AMONG ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA

## Anton C. Vrame

In general, scholars view and treat Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox churches in America in monolithic terms.[1] Across communities, cultures, jurisdictions, and individuals, they see Orthodox Christianity as essentially homogeneous. Certainly, this is true in terms of *orthodoxy*, that is, dogma and doctrine, and to a large extent, we see little variety of opinion on theological questions.

This may be because Orthodox scholarship thus far has dealt with the "big questions": historical, patristic, biblical, systematic and doctrinal, ethical and liturgical issues. Little work has been done in studying the behavior of individual Orthodox believers or communities, and their attitudes toward and their appropriation of the Orthodox tradition—known as their "orthopraxy." Ortho-

[1]See, for example, Timothy Ware's *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), which introduces the Orthodox Church as a single ecclesial reality and makes no real distinctions between the various Orthodox bodies in terms of their appropriation and lived experience of the Orthodox tradition.

praxy indicates the observable behaviors of the Orthodox parish, monastery, diocese, and so forth, as related to lived expressions of the Orthodox tradition. These observable ways of life include but are not limited to: liturgical and fasting practices, and social engagement and involvement. Calling these practices "ortho," by this definition, denotes them as being *correct* (*ortho* = true, correct, upright).

The difference between the study of orthodoxy and the study of orthopraxy might be compared to the difference between "macro-theology" and "micro-theology." "Macro-theology" would be similar to macroeconomics, which looks at entire economic systems, and "micro-theology" would be akin to microeconomics, which looks at the activity of a single business in a large economic system. For example, scholars of Orthodox ecclesiology have explained the macro-theology of "the church as communion," but they have done little systematic investigation as to how parishes or individuals apply such theology to organize parish life in a conciliar manner. Indeed, many scholars know very little of what actually goes on in parishes, and even less of the behaviors of individual Orthodox Christians. Clinical and pastoral psychologists (who combine theological and psychological training) dominate the field of pastoral theology, which develops insights for counseling and guiding individuals, usually with diagnosed illnesses. However, the disciplines of sociology, cultural anthropology, ethnography and other social sciences have been generally absent from Orthodox theological scholarship, especially in the United States.[2] Nevertheless, a still small but growing body of sociological studies exists.[3]

[2] One notable exception is Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian, and Jerry Pankhurst, eds., *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-first Century* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press), 2005.
[3] See the chapter in this volume by Eleni Makris.

Ethnic customs in different Orthodox communities represent important ways—sometimes the only ways—to explain diversities of praxis among Orthodox Christians. Differences between Mediterranean (Greek, Arab, and others) and Slavic (Russian, Serbian, and others) Orthodox in orthopraxy range from liturgical practices (such as distributing palm crosses, palm fronds, bay leaves, or flowers on the Feast of the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem, or Palm Sunday) to differences in liturgical music (Byzantine chant versus Russian choral music). Nevertheless, we cannot explain diversity among Orthodox churches simply by looking at cultural differences and ethnic customs. How then can we explain liturgical differences between parishes within the same (supposedly homogenous) jurisdiction, within the one (supposedly monolithic) Orthodox Church? Moreover, for example, why would some Orthodox communities favor participation in the Ecumenical Movement and others be openly against it, even within the same jurisdiction?[4]

To answer these puzzling questions, I will outline four types of orthopraxy that I believe have emerged among Orthodox Christians in America, and place them within a comparative framework. All four types relate to acceptance or rejection of change, and degrees of change. I also will describe the present experience of Orthodox

[4]While teaching in the ecumenical setting of the Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, California), I experienced these questions first hand. Non-Orthodox students continually asked for explanations as to the differences between parishes of immigrants and parishes of assimilated Orthodox within the same jurisdiction. They asked for explanations about the differences between the Old Calendar parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the Russian-rooted Orthodox Church in America. They were puzzled that Orthodox churches appeared to have many very conservative (e.g., anti-ecumenical) communities and wondered whether liberal (pro-ecumenical) communities existed. They were puzzled that a church with so many variations could be called "the same." I realized that the usual ways of explaining Orthodox ecclesiastical life needed review.

Christians in America and suggests avenues for further investigation. My conversations with Alexey Krindatch, one of the leading researchers of habits and opinions of Orthodox Christians in America, have informed my essay and led to my sociological study of orthopraxy in the United States. In particular, data gathered from clergy and seminarians, as presented in my essay, represent a first attempt to support my theory: four basic types of orthopraxy come into view when studying American Orthodox ecclesiastical life.[5]

## THE FOUR TYPES OF ORTHOPRAXY IN AMERICA

From my observation, four "types" of orthopraxy have emerged among Orthodox parishes and Orthodox believers in the United States. They may be identified as 1) Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist, 2) Traditional, 3) Reform, and 4) Reconstructionist. Not clear-cut categories at this point, the lines distinguishing them blur. Moreover, each type can be found to one degree or another in all Orthodox jurisdictions, whether canonical or non-canonical. Further, "converts" and "cradle," and "ethnic" and "evangelical" Orthodox display all four types. Immigrants are also found among each type, as are well-assimilated, fourth-generation children of immigrants. Finally, there may be concentrations of certain types within certain groups.

I am consciously borrowing the nomenclature for the types from Judaism, which is also divided into (at least) four distinct groups: 1) Orthodox, 2) Conservative, 3) Reform, and 4) Reconstructionist. While theological differences exist between these Jewish communities, many of these differences revolve around orthopraxy.

[5]See Alexey Krindatch, "Evolving Visions of the Orthodox Priesthood in America" www.orthodoxinstitute.org/parish_needs.html (as of April 25, 2007).

Comparing Orthodox Christian groups with Jewish groups may seem odd at first, but the *sociological* similarities in America between the two groups are worth consideration. For example, both Orthodox Christianity and Judaism intertwine religious faith and ethnic culture. Also, ethno-religious and national identity issues are connected: both groups see themselves as "a people." Within the American context, challenges faced by each group, as minorities, are also similar. These challenges revolve around maintaining a distinct ethno-religious identity within a dominant culture, an issue sometimes linked with the loss of a distinct language or intermarriage, which are seen as forces that cause decline within the group. Both Judaism and Orthodox Christianity are seen as "ways of life," with distinctive rituals practiced at home and in the synagogue/church. Both also have strong intellectual and scholarly traditions, though scholarly rigor is not necessary for the day-to-day life of the average believer and practitioner of the faith.

The Orthodox Christian and Jewish respective encounters with modernity are also worth consideration. For example, eighteenth-century German Jews consciously adapted their practices—from dress to rituals—to better "fit in" with German society, thus giving shape to "Reform Judaism." In reaction, other Jews consciously rejected modernity and these adaptations, thereby giving shape to "Orthodox Judaism." Over time, these two movements crystallized and institutionalized (furthering the distinctions between them). The stories regarding the creation of Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism fall along similar lines.

Likewise, Orthodox Christians encountered modernity mostly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (although reforms of the Orthodox Church in Russia by Peter the Great exemplify an earlier encounter), with a similar story: adaptations by some were followed by the rejection of these changes by others. My under-

lying presumption and sense, however, is that Orthodox Christians and churches still are in the midst encountering modernity.[6]

## Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist Orthopraxy

Unwillingness to adapt to local current circumstances or strict preservation of practices and attitudes (usually from the "Old World") reflects the mind-set of those who accept Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy.[7] Marked by exactness (*akribeia*) toward praxis, despite local context, such Orthodox Christians exert tremendous resistance to change. Refusal to adapt to modern conditions and re-creation of previous historical periods may be found separately or in combination. In this category we may find "Old Calendar" communities who have rejected adaptation, or individuals who believe they must observe every canon, and the like. We also may find Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalists who strive to maintain an ethnic identity by retaining a particular set of practices, as found in the "old country."

The work of the Fundamentalism Project of Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby is particularly helpful for describing and understanding this category. Marty describes fundamentalism as follows:

[6]On how Judaism has managed the encounter with modernity and American life, the following are worth reading. C. Horowitz, "Are American Jews Disappearing?" *New York* 30 (July 14, 1997); Robert Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall Publishers, 1980). D. Kaplan, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[7]In conversation, the terms "ultra-conservative" and "fundamentalist" are often used interchangeably by Orthodox Christians. However, the term "fundamentalist" has a distinct American Protestant history, typically referring to those groups that read Scripture literally. Some Orthodox ultra-conservatives advocate this as well as including literal readings of other texts. Thus I am including the term "fundamentalist" in this description.

... a tendency, a habit of mind, found within religious communities and paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and movements. Fundamentalism appears as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as a people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk, fundamentalists fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved "fundamentals" are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to fend off outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious or irreligious cultural milieu. Moreover, these fundamentals are accompanied in the new religious portfolio by unprecedented claims and doctrinal innovations.[8]

The Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist type in Orthodoxy appears to conform very closely to the "enclave culture" described by Emmanuel Sivan.[9] This type is also consistent with the "ideological characteristics" described by Almond, Sivan, and Appleby: 1) reactivity to the marginalization of religion, 2) selectivity, 3) moral Manicheanism, 4) absolutism and inerrancy, and 5) millennialism and Messianism. Furthermore, this type exhibits the organizational characteristics they describe: 1) elect, chosen membership, 2) sharp boundaries, 3) authoritarian organization, and 4) behavioral requirements.[10]

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[8]Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, "Introduction," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*. The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 4, eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 1.

[9]Emmanuel Sivan, "The Enclave Culture," in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*. The Fundamentalism Project Vol. 5, eds. Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11–70.

[10]G.A. Almond, Emmanuel Sivan, and R. Scott Appleby, "Fundamental-

Moreover, certain ways of reading and interpreting texts may be associated with fundamentalism; for example, a literal reading of the Bible. In Orthodox Christianity, a fundamentalist reading of texts would include not only the Bible, but also other significant texts. It should be noted that not all Ultra-conservatives are Fundamentalists, but all Fundamentalists are Ultra-conservatives. Thus, one could be ultra-conservative in other practices, but not necessarily read texts literally.

## Traditional Orthopraxy

Those who embrace Traditional orthopraxy strive to observe the "requirements" of the tradition without employing the doctrinaire, absolutist, letter-of-the-law Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist approach. However, they generally lack the intentionality of change found, as we shall see, in the Reform and Reconstructionist types. Krindatch's study of clergy found that most Orthodox clergy "self-identify" as "Traditional" in their attitudes towards change.[11] While no such data exists regarding lay Orthodox, we might reasonably assume that most Orthodox Christians would also fall under this type, due to the leadership in their parishes. While those who espouse Traditional orthopraxy respect their heritage immensely, they also recognize the need for adaptations and practical adjustments in modern life. They recognize *akribeia* but are willing to permit *oikonomia*.[12]

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ism: Genus and Species," in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*. The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 5, 399–424, at 403.

[11]Krindatch, "Evolving Visions."

[12]*Oikonomia*, or "economy," is frequently translated as "dispensation." Lewis Patsavos describes economy as follows: ". . . always an exception to the general rule, the legal consequences following the violation of a law are lifted. 'Economy' is granted by the competent ecclesiastical authority and has not so

Traditional orthopraxy takes a commonsensical and pragmatic approach to religious appropriation and expression, tending to change slowly, and permitting praxis to evolve over time. Change never outpaces the desires of the community, or becomes disruptive, since evolution occurs as a natural process of an "organic community." As Daniel Payne points out, the Orthodox Church as the body of Christ "is a Who, not a What. It is an organic person, a living organism, not an institution or human made creation."[13] The practical theologian James Fowler, in a discussion of community development and change, observes the following about communities that see themselves in this manner:

> In the organismic metaphor (for community) the basic experience and image is that of a body—a biological organism. *As in the experience of organic growth, there is a kind of natural unfolding of growth or change in the community as body.* A second reference for the organic model is the extended family, usually with patriarchal authority. Like organs and limbs, members of organic communities have their specific places and functions. They are not interchangeable; their management is not subject to rational bureaucratic planning and decision making. . . . Tradition, as interpreted by the leadership elite, is usually the strongest normative reference and source of justification for decision and action in the community. The Greek Orthodox

much the character of urgency as it does the character of compassion for human frailty." Lewis Patsavos, "The Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church," in *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church*, ed. Fotios K. Litsas (New York: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, 1991), 137–47, at 145.

[13] Daniel Payne, "The Challenge of Western Globalization to Orthodox Christianity," in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, eds. Jonathan Sutton and Wil van den Bercken (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 133–44, at 134.

communion appears to preserve a strongly organic character. Elements of a "mystery-mastery" approach to authority flourish in such communions. *Change, when it comes, must be made to appear as an evolutionary development,* sanctioned through its extension of tradition, and not altering in fundamental ways the organic structure of the community.[14]

## Reform Orthopraxy

Reform orthopraxy refers to the intentional adaptation of the tradition to a new situation, and was the first type of orthopraxy to emerge on the American scene. Immigrants and missionaries realized that practices observed in the "old country" had to be adapted to the new realities of American life. These ranged from avoidance of "foreign" appearances in the adopted homeland to reorganization of community life based on the requirements of American law. For example, in the early twentieth century some clergy quickly adapted their dress and appearance, changing from cassocks, long beards, and *kallimafia* (headwear) to suits with ties (the use of the Roman collar would be an even later adaptation), goatees, and fedoras.[15] Once parishes began to organize themselves as corporations, structures of parish councils of elected laymen (allowing women to be involved would come later) and general assemblies of members began to appear.[16] Some might argue that these were not "reforms" at all, but rather the result of the gradual assimilation or *evolution*

[14]James Fowler, *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 33, emphasis added.

[15]In actuality, these recommendations emanated from the 1923 Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople. See Patrick Viscuso, *A Quest for Reform: The Pan Orthodox Congress in Constantinople, A Translation and Analysis of Its Acts and Decisions* (Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2006).

[16]See John Erickson, "Organization, Community, Church: Reflections on

of Orthodox churches in American life. Here, we witness a distinction between intentional change—reform—and evolutionary change.

Reform, as a conscious, intentional process, usually is implemented to correct a perceived wrong. In the case of Reform orthopraxy, intentional changes were made so Orthodox Christians could adapt to a new reality, to "fit in" and be "accepted" by the wider culture; or, they were made to demonstrate that Orthodox Christianity was a "modern religion." For example, St Innocent (Veniaminov) adapted the fasting disciplines for the Alaskan natives, whose exclusive diet of animal products could not be changed to a vegetable diet because there were no vegetables to be had.[17] Greek choirmasters took Byzantine melodies and set them to four-part harmonies with organ accompaniment because they wished to show development in their musical heritage.

A question worth exploring is the degree to which reforms have become acceptable to those who espouse Traditional orthopraxy, or even acceptable to those who advocate Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy. For example, have Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalists moderated their views on fasting to accommodate modern life?

## Reconstructionist Orthopraxy

According to data collected by Krindatch, Reconstructionist orthopraxy constitutes a very small piece of the Church in America, being

Orthodox Parish Polity, in America" in *The Orthodox Parish in America: Faithfulness to the Past and Responsibility for the Future*, ed. by Anton C. Vrame (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2004), 67–82.

[17]Barbara Smith, *Orthodoxy and Native Americans: The Alaskan Mission* (Syosset, NY: Orthodox Church in America Department of History and Archives, 1980), 29.

represented by less than 10% of its clergy.[18] Nevertheless, individuals and communities are striving to "rethink" orthopraxy, in order to develop new expressions for America. Among these types, we would expect to find more innovation than Reform types would advocate, for example as those found in the research by Tolly Kizilos.[19] Such suggestions range from scholarly proposals to reconstruct Orthodox liturgical life to less-than-well-informed proposals to reconstruct Orthodox polity based on the principles of American democracy or corporate practices.

## THE FOUR TYPES OF ORTHOPRAXY: GUIDES TO BEHAVIOR

Clearly, none of the types of orthopraxy challenge Orthodox faith or doctrine: Chalcedonian Christology, the authority of the Ecumenical Councils, the role of icons, the transformation of the bread and wine in the Eucharist into the Body and Blood of Christ, the validity or power of the sacraments, and so forth. Unlike Judaism—which has experienced theological division leading to different institutional expressions (especially in the theological education of rabbis) and a breach in relationships between the branches—Orthodox Christianity maintains its unity through the different jurisdictions with their different forms of praxis by being "in communion" with one another. That is, the churches mutually recognize each other as authentically Orthodox, in spite of significant practical differences, such as the use of different calendars (the "Julian Calendar," or "Old Calendar," versus the "Revised Julian Calendar," or the

[18]Krindatch, "Evolving Visions."
[19]See Tolly Kizilos, *Tradition and Change: Concerns for Today's Greek Orthodox Church of America* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 2000).

"New Calendar"). To emphasize this point, imagine adherents of one type of orthopraxy declaring their preference as the only authentic form of Orthodox Christianity, excluding practitioners of other forms from their communities and establishing their own institutions based on one form of praxis.

However, key distinctions in orthopraxy do result in diverging approaches to identifying a way of life fitting and appropriate for an Orthodox Christian in America. Applications of these approaches appear to revolve around eight areas of praxis, which are not limited to personal or communal application but include a wider set of concerns about the engagement of an Orthodox Christian with the world around him—culture in its broadest consideration. Still, a common distinction among these areas of praxis is the degree to which each type views and permits change.

The table on the following pages displays characteristics of praxis that are neither exhaustive nor final, but rather, suggestive of further exploration and reflection. We may view them as continua by which we may discern whether persons or communities fit particular types. Since the types are not clear and precise, however, neither are the characteristics clear and precise among persons or communities. However, we may use the table as a heuristic device to measure behaviors, and our research should unveil an emerging pattern that would allow some discernment of types.

## Orthopraxy as Ideology

Apparently, as the table suggests, a variety of possibilities exist for orthopraxy in America. So, individuals struggling to live as "genuinely Orthodox" may be presented multiple ways of expressing their faith on a daily basis by various sources: Internet, publications, and clergy and monastic guides. Moreover, since each type claims

## FOUR TYPES OF ORTHOPRAXY

| | Reconstructionist Orthopraxy | Reform Orthopraxy | Traditional Orthopraxy | Ultra-conservative/ Fundamentalist Orthopraxy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Texts and Interpretation | Dynamic reading of texts, open to multiple sources and forms of interpretation, even patristic sources need interpretation. Texts not only need contextualization, but may also need re-writing. | Dynamic reading of texts, open to multiple sources and forms of interpretation, even patristic sources need interpretation. Texts need contextualization for interpretation. | Dynamic reading of texts, patristic interpretation valuable, but not only source. Texts need to be contextualized. | Literal read of Biblical, patristic, and especially canonical texts. Only patristic and other Orthodox interpretation considered valuable. |
| Authority and Structure | Democratic. Communities can and should make decisions for themselves. Individuals free to act independently. | Hierarchical with strong elements of democracy. Clergy and laity have high degree of participation in governance and direction of Church life. | Hierarchical and Conciliar, symbolic, Clergy and laity under the leadership of hierarchy to determine future direction. A goal of the authoritative relationship is for self-directing behavior. | Rigid obedience to authority, very hierarchical. Permission from the geronta or spiritual father is needed for many decisions. |
| Liturgical Life | Argues for new forms and patterns of worship. Translation would be dynamic, but also permit for new texts for worship. New musical traditions would be expected to be developed, in new languages. Musical instruments or accompaniments would be acceptable. Architecture expected to adapt for new situations and environments, including experimentation with new forms. Seating in church (including pews) seen as normal. | Follow the Typikon with more adaptation. Translation would be dynamic and contextual to new social realities. Music would begin to adapt from original forms, in new languages. Musical instruments or accompaniments would be acceptable. Architecture would replicate forms and adapt for new situations and environments, including experimentation with new forms. Seating would be seen as normal. | Follow the Typikon with some adaptation. Translation would be faithful to original text. Music would seek to replicate but could adapt, replicate original forms, even in new languages. No musical instruments or accompaniments, except to give pitches. Architecture would replicate forms and adapt for new situations and environments. Seating would be allowed. | Follow the Typikon exactly. Translation is literal. Music is in original forms, even in new languages. No musical instruments or accompaniments. Architecture would strive to replicate ancient forms. Seating in church is forbidden, except as an accommodation for a few elderly or sick persons. People may even sit on the floor during sermons. |

| | Reconstructionist Orthopraxy | Reform Orthopraxy | Traditional Orthopraxy | Ultra-conservative/ Fundamentalist Orthopraxy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treatment of Women | Women on an equal footing with men. Advocate women's ordination to priesthood. Issues of ritual purity seen as anachronistic. | Women on an equal footing with men. Advocate greater leadership roles for women, including ordination to the diaconate. Issues of ritual purity seen as anachronistic. | Women are active in typical feminine roles, as caretakers, hostesses, and so forth. Women will be active in a community, but not in roles held typically by men. | Women relegated to "second status." Matters of "ritual purity" would be followed exactly. Women gather on north side of nave. Advocates distinctive dress for women, especially for church attendance, long dress, such as head covering, long dress. Women's roles in church limited. |
| Piety | New forms must be created for "New World" realities. | "Old World" forms must adapt. | Faithful to "Old World" but willing to adapt to new realities. | Appears anachronistic in its adherence to forms from "Old World." |
| Ecumenism | Pro-ecumenical, might advocate intercommunion of Christians now. | Pro-ecumenical, with a positive view of outcome. | Pro-ecumenical, with limitations on expectations. | Anti-ecumenical, official contacts with other Christians should be avoided. Ecumenism is a heresy. |
| Secular knowledge | Very Positive. | Positive. | Generally positive, but with some reservation. | Negative. Children are home-schooled or in exclusively Orthodox schools. |
| Social Issues | Liberal as understood in US political life. | Moderate to liberal. | Moderate to conservative. | Conservative as understood in US political life. |

to bear the authentic Orthodox tradition, a dangerous moment appears when one particular vision of orthopraxy becomes absolute, idealized, and exclusive—especially when it stands in judgment over other orthopraxies. This already has occurred: Ultra-conservatives/Fundamentalists have accused the other three types of "watering down," "compromising," and "becoming Protestant," whereas Reformers and Reconstructionists have accused Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalists of "turning back the clock," "creating a cult of Orthodoxy," and so forth.

## POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR TYPES

Each of the four types has its *raison d'etre*, which I will explore individually. The table indicates a continuum of reactivity to modernity and change: from rejection of modernity to its embrace and rejection of change to advocacy and initiation of change. Therefore, several areas contributing to the germination and furtherance of each type are worth investigating.

### Reaction to Modernity

For Orthodox Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalists, "reactivity is the basic impulse," in this case, directed towards modernity and its effects. According to Wuthnow and Lawson, fundamentalism "does not simply respond to modernity, it caricatures modernity, redefining it in a way that heightens the contrast between its evils and the good life provided by a belief in Christ."[20]

[20]Robert Wuthnow and Matthew Lawson, "Sources of Christian Fundamentalism in the United States," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 4, 42.

The following description by Almond, Sivan, and Appleby particularly helps in discerning a fundamentalist type. Historically, these authors remind us that most fundamentalist religious movements emerged in the wake of nineteenth- and twentieth-century progress, especially in the field of science. As a result

> Fundamentalist movements are the historical counterattacks mounted from these threatened religious traditions, seeking to hold ground against this spreading secular "contamination," and even to regain ground by taking advantage of the weaknesses of modernization. These weaknesses include costly and threatening "side effects" such as crime and "moral decay," the breakdown of the family and the community, environmental pollution, and the like.[21]

Fundamentalism seeks to keep the effects of modernity out of the Church, albeit on a very selective basis. For example, although Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy embraces communication technology, it simultaneously flaunts academic achievement and scholarship, as it justifies rejection of the secular academy. Oppositely, the Reform and Reconstructionist orthopraxy have embraced modernity and endeavor to bring this conversation within the life of the Church.

## Privatization of Orthodox Christianity

Deprivatization of religion is a recent phenomenon that challenges theorists' assumptions and determinations that through secularization, religion would fade from importance in the public

[21] Almond, Sivan, and Appleby, "Fundamentalism: Genus and Species" in *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, The Fundamentalism Project, Vol. 5, 403.

sphere.[22]Interestingly, as Orthodox churches "modernized" in the 1960s and 1970s, they became more, not less, engaged in the public sphere. But, since the 1980s, as other religious groups have become more politically and socially active, Orthodox churches have retreated from public activity, with a few notable exceptions: e.g., the involvement of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) hierarchs in the pro-life movement and the public notoriety of Greek Orthodox Archbishop Demetrios in New York City following the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. (Worth asking is whether or not the Archbishop would have taken or been offered such a role if St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church had not been destroyed in the collapse of the World Trade Center.)

Have Orthodox Christians given up as active actors in American public space, preferring to retreat to the haven of developing personal piety? From a fairly public role in the 1960s and 1970s, have they turned to the private space of home and parish? The following observation of Parker Palmer, written at the time Orthodox churches may have begun to turn inward, seems an appropriate description of the privatization of orthopraxy.

We have lost the conviction that a public life is worth living. . . . Most of us seek to live and work in the most private spaces possible, spaces where the public cannot intrude . . . . As our public experience dwindles, we come to regard "the public" as an empty abstraction or as a sinister, anonymous crowd whose potential for violence fills us with fear. That potential is there but we have blown it out of proportion. As our privacy deepens and our distance from the public increases, we pay a terrible

[22]See Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

price. We lose our sense of relatedness to those strangers with whom we must share the earth.[23]

Jose Casanova points to this as well, when he writes: "Only those religions which either by doctrine or by cultural tradition have a public, communal identity will want to assume public roles and resist the pressure to become solely or even primarily private 'invisible' religions of individual salvation."[24]

The Orthodox Churches in the 1960s and 1970s were engaged in American public life and felt they were contributing to the public good. In the 1960s, Archbishop Iakovos actively participated in the Civil Rights Movement, marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. and appearing on the cover of *Life* on March 26, 1965. In the 1970s, the Greek community was mobilized by the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus, to become an active voice in Washington D.C., lobbying for a resolution to the island's division, the refugee issue, and U.S. policy toward Turkey. Throughout this period, the Clergy-Laity Congresses of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese regularly prepared resolutions and statements on the ethical and moral issues facing the country. These statements were disseminated, discussed, and studied. In the 1980s, thousands of young adults would gather in conferences organized by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, during which there would be opportunities to serve in the community—from homeless shelters to hospitals. In the 1980s and 1990s, with the incorporation of the Evangelical Orthodox Church into canonical Orthodoxy, the excitement was about "making America Orthodox."

Today, the Orthodox churches seem less engaged with issues of American public life than ever. The issues on the minds of most

[23] Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 21.
[24] Casanova, *Public Religion*, 224.

Orthodox seem to be those of polity of the church jurisdictions, especially the minds of the Reform and Reconstructionist types. Matters regarding the common good of American society are hardly discussed. Statements issued by synods of bishops on widely debated topics in our country—from stem cell research to gay marriage—are hardly noticed by either the public sphere or even the parish populations. Young adult conferences are considered successful if they attract three hundred participants and present a catechetical agenda. Very few Orthodox, it seems, talk anymore about "making America Orthodox."

## Orthodox Attitudes towards "the West"

Makrides and Uffelmann have described "anti-Westernism" in Orthodox Christianity, noting:

> For the overwhelming majority of the Orthodox, from the late Byzantine times onwards, the West signified a place out of which originated mainly dangers for Orthodox Christianity. . . . The West as a whole—and not only in religious terms—was further demonized as a place inhabited by heretics, who had not preserved the inherited Orthodox faith in its unadulterated form. Such attitudes can be observed among numerous Orthodox groups ranging from the Russian Old Believers in the seventeenth century to the rigorist Old Calendarist in twentieth-century Greece. Due to this generalization of differences, modern science was rejected by several Orthodox groups in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as representing something coming from the fallen and heretical West. Dreading the strong Western influence upon the East, many Orthodox went so far as to construct perpetual and eternal enemies out of the

West and to suspect a general Western conspiracy which aimed at conquering the Orthodox East.[25]

Makrides and Uffelmann also describe the opposite phenomenon: "pro-Western Orthodox." That these two opposing orientations can exist in the same community has lead Samuel Huntington to describe Russia and Greece as "torn countries."[26]

In spite of living in the West, American Orthodox also operate under the same tension as regards their orthopraxy. A fierce anti-Western attitude, ranging from popular culture to modern science to theological resources from other traditions, marks Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy. Conversely, among Reformers and Reconstructionists one finds a pro-Western orientation.

Makrides and Uffelmann describe anti-Westernism in five distinct groups: 1) Orthodox fundamentalists, Old Calendarists, Orthodox monks from Mount Athos, Sergiev Posad, and so forth; 2) educated clergy and theologians; 3) intellectuals and writers who "look for Orthodox specificity and uniqueness through a demarcation from the West" (identifying Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as an example); 4) official hierarchy attempting to show a conciliatory attitude toward the West, without risking their basic positions on issues; and 5) the wider population exhibiting both xenophilic and xenophobic tendencies.[27]

While Makrides and Uffelmann do not continue their list, we might easily imagine a continuum that includes groups of hierarchs, clergy, lay people, intellectuals, and theologians that demon-

[25]Vasilios Makrides and D. Uffelmann, "Studying Eastern Orthodox Anti-Westernism: The Need for a Comparative Research Agenda" in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, eds. Jonathan Sutton and Wil van den Bercken (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 87–120, at 93–94.

[26]Ibid., 98.

[27]Ibid., 109–110.

strate a pro-Western attitude. This pro-Western approach might advocate adopting greater democracy and openness within Orthodox ecclesiastical polity. A pro-Western approach might also advocate that liturgical life be adapted to fit American linguistic idiom, musical styles, or inclusion of the American civil calendar into the ecclesiastical calendar (e.g., a liturgical celebration for Independence Day or Thanksgiving Day).

## Ethnic versus Assimilated Parishes

Perhaps the "ethnic parish," that is, a community reflecting the dominance of one national group, which influences the personality, liturgical life, spiritual practice, and worldview of the community, has never really disappeared. For approximately the last twenty years, such a community was roundly criticized as problematic, an example of ethno-phyletism in orthopraxy. For example, Frank Schaeffer condemns the "ethnic clubs" of some Orthodox parishes:

> ... to the new or prospective convert, perhaps used to the enthusiasm, false or misdirected as they may be, of some Protestant sects, some Orthodox congregations will seem to be places in which Greeks, Ukrainians, Palestinians, Russians or others gather to eat national food, speak in their native language, encourage their children to socialize (and marry within the ethnic clan), and where the fervent Christian sacramental life in Christ has been all but forgotten. To put it another way, the naïve convert looking for Mount Athos may well be more likely to find a local "Orthodox" church that is nothing more than an ethnic version of the local Elks Club.[28]

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[28]Frank Schaeffer, *Dancing Alone: The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religion* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 301.

Since the fall of communism in 1989, the inflow of immigrants from the Republics of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and so on), and the former Warsaw Pact nations (former Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, et al.), have forced American parishes and jurisdictions of Slavic backgrounds to adapt to a new reality. Additionally, the enduring crisis in the Middle East and the growing Islamic structuring of Middle Eastern nations have caused an inflow of Orthodox Christian immigrants from Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and so forth, to America; so the Antiochian Archdiocese and its parishes have also had to adapt. As a result, a resurgence of "ethnic parishes," with liturgies in Church Slavonic and Arabic, along with the need for clergy who speak Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Arabic and other languages is occurring. Also, rather than incorporate themselves into existing parishes, some of these immigrants have chosen to organize separate parishes. Consequently, we may wonder: Have recent influxes of immigrants changed the landscape of American Orthodox communities, requiring different ways of orthopraxy, ones mimicking the praxis of the "Old World" communities?

At the other end of this continuum, what is occurring in parishes where the fourth and fifth generations—the assimilated adult grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants—represent the dominant population? These communities experience high rates of intermarriage to non-Orthodox and non-ethnics—as high as 80% in some jurisdictions. In these communities, original émigré languages have generally been lost, or reduced to a few phrases; "mother country" liturgical languages are not understood and frequently resisted; and converts to Orthodoxy increasingly enter leadership roles, while finding the inefficiencies, dysfunctions, or attitudes of the immigrant population unbearable. Here, we may further wonder: How has the assimilation of traditionally

Orthodox populations into the wider American milieu affected their understanding of, and their lived, orthopraxy? Along the way, have new distinctively American forms of orthopraxy begun to emerge?

## Converts and Cradle Orthodox

Paisios Whitesides's description of the tensions between ethnic, born-and-raised members and Evangelical converts in the Orthodox Church may represent only a beginning to the research needed.[29] Increases in the numbers embracing Orthodox Christianity from "Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist" backgrounds may certainly be affecting the varieties of orthopraxy. Recent rises in numbers of clergy from convert backgrounds presents a case in point.

Alexey Krindatch's recent study of convert seminarians (from Catholic and Episcopalian backgrounds) provides an interesting snapshot of this phenomenon. Differences between cradle and convert seminarians has become increasingly obvious. According to Krindatch, convert seminarians "are attempting 'to return to their churches' religious experiences of twenty or thirty years ago, when their churches were more traditional.'"[30] Krindatch's study of seminarians confirms "the widespread notion that Protestant and Catholic converts tend to be 'more Orthodox' than persons who were born and raised in the Orthodox Church. . . . former Protestant and Catholic students demonstrated more conservative and traditionalist attitudes towards such issues as sources of authority in parish life, ecumenical worship, religiously mixed marriages, etc."[31]

[29]Paisios Bukowy Whitesides, "Ethnics and Evangelicals: Theological Tensions within American Orthodox Christianity" *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 41 (1997): 19–35.

[30]J. Dart, "Converts to Orthodoxy Often More Conservative" *Christian Century* (December 28, 2004): 21.

[31]Alexey Krindatch, "'American Orthodoxy' or 'Orthodoxy in America'?:

However, these same students have a very positive vision for the future of Orthodoxy in America. Krindatch posits that "the growing proportion of converts among future Orthodox clergy will lead either to the 'Americanization' of the Orthodox Churches and to their fuller integration with the wider American society, or, to the contrary, it will contribute to the further separation of Orthodoxy from mainstream Christianity in the United States."[32]

While many recent converts are matriculating in seminaries, most converts to Orthodoxy contently remain in parish life. More generally, since the phenomenon of conversion from one religious tradition to another is complex, a worthwhile and fascinating endeavor might be for Orthodox psychologists to interview willing converts about their experience and compare the results with the literature of conversion. Many cradle Orthodox observe that converts seem "to be more Orthodox than the Orthodox," meaning, more rigorous in their praxis and having a greater knowledge of history and doctrine, for example, than someone born into the tradition.

V. Bailey Gillespie has provided an excellent overview of the phenomenon of conversion from biblical, theological, historical, and psychological perspectives. Exemplifying that Orthodox need to further research the phenomenon, Gillespie's one particular study feels familiar to cradle Orthodox, even if exaggerated. He states that converts display

> 1) an exaggerated, irrational intensity of belief in the new doctrine; 2) the convert is more concerned with the form and doctrine than with the greater principle of his new belief; 3) the convert's attitude toward previous belief is one of contempt,

Profiling the Next Generation of Eastern Clergy in the USA," unpublished paper, 14.
[32]Ibid., 10.

hatred, and denial, and he/she rejects the possibility that there might be any truth to it; 4) the convert is intolerant toward all deviates, with frequent acting-out by denouncing and endangering previous friends and associates; 5) the convert shows a crusading zeal and a need to involve others by seeking new conversions; and, 6) the convert engages in masochistic and sadistic activities, displaying a need for martyrdom and self-punishment.[33]

Another place for Orthodox to research the phenomenon would be through the works by Thomas Doulis, both of which contain the personal stories of converts to Orthodox Christianity.[34] I have noted elsewhere, and more gently, the difference between cradle and convert Orthodox: cradle Orthodox are well formed in the tradition but not necessarily well informed, while convert Orthodox are well informed, but not well formed.[35]

## The Rise in the Presence of Monasteries in America

Orthodox monks and monastic communities have been present in North America since the first Russian missions in the eighteenth century. St Tikhon's Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania is just one example of a monastic community that has existed for more than a century. Mostly, monastic communities keep to themselves and attract little attention. However, in the last ten years we

[33]V. Bailey Gillespie, *The Dynamics of Religious Conversion* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1991), 69.

[34]See Thomas Doulis, *Journeys to Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1986) and Thomas Doulis, *Toward the Authentic Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1996).

[35]Anton C. Vrame, "Arches Orthodoxias kai Prooptikes sten Ekpaideuse" in *Ta Threskeutika os Mathema Tautotetas kai Politismou* (Athens: Greek Parliament, 2005), 37–47, at 45.

have witnessed a rise in their visible presence and influence on the wider Church and its membership. In particular, monastic communities in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese under leadership of Elder Ephraim (former Abbot of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos) have taken center stage. Given their Athonite conservatism, and extreme piety combined with Greek nationalism, these communities have been particularly attractive to both converts and cradle Orthodox of two types: those seeking an extreme religious experience or praxis (as can be found throughout the communities of Mount Athos); and Greek immigrants seeking a nostalgic community where their native language primarily is spoken. Participants in these communities bring the same expectations to their parishes and strive to live an extreme religiosity "in the world." Adherents of the Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist type might likely be regular visitors to and followers of these communities.

Along a continuum, monasteries espousing Traditional praxis within American life have also existed; here the religiosity is less extreme. Quite possibly, some monastic communities have been sources of Reform and Reconstructionist praxis for American church life, for, while monasticism historically has resisted adaptation and innovation, monasteries are known for their divergent (especially, liturgical) practices: e.g., the difference between the Sabbite Typikon in Jerusalem and the Studite Typikon in Constantinople.

## CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS OF THE FOUR TYPES

### Further Research

Research on types of orthopraxy could move on many fronts. Further description of each of the types is necessary at three levels: the individual practitioner, the parish/community, and the diocese/

archdiocese. Anthropological and ethnographic study of communities has barely been undertaken. Systematic, sociological, statistical description of the types is beginning, but expansion would be important. Also important would be historical study of how various Orthodox communities and their members have addressed the issues of praxis in the United States. Finally, theologians would do well to reflect—especially in dialogue with the social sciences—more greatly on the variety of orthopraxy in light of the Orthodox principle of "unity in diversity."

## Descriptive, Not Predictive

I have attempted to describe and provide a framework for understanding the varieties of orthopraxy in America, to challenge the assumption of a monolithic Orthodox experience. At the same time, I am greatly concerned that my descriptions will predict the American Orthodox experience to come. Simple questions must be asked: Can the four types co-exist in one Orthodox Church within the United States? Or, might the diversity between the types become too great, leading to schism or fragmentation along typological lines? That adherents of Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy might break away is not inconceivable, given the example of schism and schismatic groups among such noticeable communities as the Old Calendar Churches of Greece or the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (examples of an Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist orthopraxy), prior to its reconciliation with the Church of Russia in 2007.[36] Could other Orthodox communities in America find themselves, in the future, realigning along the types?

[36]See www.mospat.ru/index.php?.med=275 last accessed October 12, 2007.

## A Re-statement of the Middle

Three types of orthopraxy are easily described. Adherents of the Ultra-conservative/Fundamentalist type are prolific communicators: not only do they write books, but they also write letters to editors and statements; of late, they create web sites. Reform and Reconstructionist types are also fairly easily identifiable, although there are fewer adherents, and they are less prolific. But what of the middle ground, Traditional orthopraxy?

Having described Traditional orthopraxy asa type of person or community that recognizes exactness (*akribeia*)but allows for human frailty (*oikonomia*) and is open to practices inherently organic to the living body of Christ and in relationship to the cultural environment in which the Church dwells—in this case, twenty-first century America—I suggest it as a bridge among all the types. Therefore, to explore its characteristics and depths further (as typified in the table presented in this essay) remains an essential task for Orthodox Christians in America.

# BYZANTINE LITURGY AS GOD'S FAMILY AT PRAYER

## John Klentos

Although scholars have not yet discussed it with academic rigor, perhaps the biggest problem facing Orthodox Churches today is the tension between so-called conservatives (traditionalists) and liberals (progressives, modernists).[1] In the United States we need only look at the tensions created in many parishes by the influence of conservative monasteries or at the ongoing struggle between the Ecumenical Patriarchate (and, by extension, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese) and the Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL).[2] While it is not uncommon to point out that

[1] It is notoriously difficult to define "Conservative" and "Liberal" since such labels depend on determining where one falls on a full spectrum of attitudes concerning political, economic, social, and religious issues. Furthermore, the same attitudes may be liberal in one context and conservative in another; for example, one person may be seen as a conservative at work and a liberal at church. David Horowitz provided a helpful description in a 1992 lecture to the Heritage Foundation: conservatives are distinguished by "an attitude about the lessons of the actual past. By contrast, the attention of progressives [is] directed toward an imagined future." Quoted in John W. Dean, *Conservatives without Conscience* (New York: Viking, 2006), 34.

[2] A detailed articulation of the vision of OCL, see Stephen J. Sfekas and George E. Matsoukas, eds., *Project for Orthodox Renewal: Seven Studies of Key Issues Facing Orthodox Christians in America* (Chicago: Orthodox Christian

the conservative monastic movements embrace a rather strict adherence to monastic traditions that emphasize hesychast spirituality[3] or to view the OCL as pursuing a lay-centered (if not congregational) church polity, these approaches to explaining the causes of tension do little to work toward an authentic reconciliation among those involved in the disagreements.

In his book, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, George Lakoff outlined and examined the conceptual systems behind conservative and liberal thought.[4] His analysis demonstrates rather persuasively that these divergent political worldviews are based on moral systems that are, themselves, derived from models of family: conservatives adhere to a "Strict Father" model while liberals embrace a "Nurturant Parent" model. Lakoff also devotes attention to the ways in which these models affect how people understand and interpret the Christian faith, God, and humanity.

Although Lakoff's exploration of Christianity is brief, it suggests a way of looking at various challenges facing the Orthodox Christian Church in the United States today. In this essay, I use Lakoff's categories and analysis as a productive way to discuss tensions between conservatives and liberals within Orthodox churches. I

Laity, Inc., 1993). One instance of the tension between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the OCL is detailed in Andrew Walsh, "Unexpected Consequences: The Revolt against Archbishop Spyridon in the Greek Archdiocese of America, 1996–99" in Anton C. Vrame, ed., *One Calling in Christ: The Laity in the Orthodox Church* (Berkeley CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2005), 57–74.

[3]Philip Sherrard, "The Revival of Hesychast Spirituality" in Louis Dupré and Don E. Saliers, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 417–31.

[4]George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002). Lakoff, Professor of Linguistics and Cognitive Science at the University of California, Berkeley, analyzes "central models" of conservative and liberal thought "whose structures determine a wide range of variations." See pp. 14f.

intend to move beyond a simple right-wrong dichotomy in order to construct an intelligibility framework that presents our evolving, multi-faceted tradition more precisely. My hypothesis is that Orthodox Christians cling either to "Strict Father" or "Nurturing Parent" models of God, and this affects our behavior, in particular, our liturgical behavior. Since liturgy is "the ground on which all things meet and make sense, and outside of which everything remains unrecognizable and isolated,"[5] an analysis of liturgy seems an ideal place to test the application of Lakoff's insights to the situation of Orthodox Christian churches today.

## BYZANTINE LITURGICAL HISTORY IN REVIEW

Over the past twenty-five years, liturgiologists have done much to rediscover the development of Christian worship, from initial diversity to a later uniformity focused on major urban centers (e.g., Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, Rome, Jerusalem, Seleucia-Ctesiphon). Their research has given us a greater appreciation for the sources that came together to form what is known as the Byzantine liturgy. Their research also indicates that any discussion of development and change of liturgical practices needs to take into account the diversity and evolution of worship within the Byzantine tradition. The rubrics contained in liturgical books do not preserve a "Golden Age of patristic liturgy," nor are they indicative of an "immovable tradition." They simply indicate the practices of a particular time and place that have become part of a printed tradition that is, itself, not monolithic.[6] Simply put, there is no timeless and

[5]John Chryssavgis, *Light Through Darkness: The Orthodox Tradition*, Traditions of Christian Spirituality (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 39.
[6]See Robert F. Taft, "The Contribution of Eastern Liturgy to the Under-

universal "right way" of celebrating liturgy in the Orthodox Church. Proponents and opponents of altering current liturgical practices must be aware of the larger historical context from which they have received their tradition and to which they are contributing for future generations' identity and edification.

Prior to the late fourth century, we know little of the liturgy in Constantinople beyond its dependence on a suffragan bishop of the Metropolitan of Heraclea in Thrace, which suggests that it followed the patterns and practices of Antioch.[7] Late in the fourth century John Chrysostom (AD 398–404), himself a transplant from Antioch, became Archbishop of Constantinople, bringing with him the Antiochene *Anaphora of the Twelve Apostles* and embellishing the city's anti-Arian torchlight processions with silver crosses adorned with lighted candles, designed by him and financed by the Empress Eudoxia.[8] The building programs of Theodosios II (AD 408–450) and Justinian the Great (AD 527–565) produced the monuments that served as reference-points for the stational liturgy in the capital city. Most notable was Justinian's Great Church of *Hagia Sophia* (dedicated 27 December 537), which became the definitive architectural context for Constantinopolitan liturgy; the mystagogical explanation of worship as heavenly activity was realized in mortar, stone, and alabaster.

standing of Christian Worship" *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 37 (1996): 273–98. See also Thomas Pott, *La réforme liturgique byzantine: Étude du phénomè de l'évolution non-spontanée de la liturgie byzantine* (Rome: CLV–Edizioni Liturgiche, 2000), and Alexander Schmemann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, 3rd edition (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986).

[7] Robert F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 24.

[8] Sozomen *Historia ecclesiastica*, VIII.8 (Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 50:360–61). Cf. John F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 228 (Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium, 1987), 183f., and Taft, *Short History*, 31f.

This tradition, the so-called "Cathedral Rite," was both imperial and popular in character. Infused with ritual pomp befitting the emperor and patriarch, it was configured in such a way as to allow thousands of faithful to make their way through the city streets chanting antiphons before entering the church where the eucharistic liturgy was to be celebrated. Even morning and evening prayer were composed primarily of antiphonal chants and prayers. The euchologion (a book containing the prayers said by priests and bishops) of the Great Church is preserved in the oldest extant liturgical manuscript, the *Barbarini gr. 336*.[9] It is important to remember that presbyteral prayers were said aloud, allowing the faithful to hear the euchologial recollection of salvation history.[10] During this period, liturgical explanations stressed that human worship was an image of heavenly liturgy so vivid that the angels themselves came from heaven to participate on earth, as the Cherubic Hymn suggests and the entrance prayer states explicitly:

> Master Lord, our God, who has established in heaven the orders and armies of angels and archangels to minister to your glory, grant that the holy angels may enter with us, and serve and glorify your goodness together with us. For to you are due all glory honor and worship . . .[11]

According to this understanding, liturgy was the place where heaven and earth converged. The low dome at Hagia Sophia served

9 Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska, eds., *L'eucologio Barberini gr. 336: Ff. 1–263* (Rome: CLV, 1995).

10 Robert F. Taft, "Was the Eucharistic Anaphora Recited Secretly or Aloud? The Ancient Tradition and What Became of It" in Roberta R. Ervine, ed., *Worship Traditions in Armenia and the Neighboring Christian East* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 15–57.

11 Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.

as an image of the heavenly vault sheltering the concelebration of humans and angels, the earthly meeting of "ecclesiastical and secular hierarchies."[12] Since angels descended to celebrate with humans, it was only appropriate that the horizontal axis of the building be emphasized.

From the late sixth century and culminating in the struggle against Iconoclasm,[13] a slow evolution began, which changed liturgical experience and interpretation significantly. Influenced by East Syrian practice, priests began to recite prayers silently, shifting the focus entirely to chants and ritual actions. Now, worship services were being explained as figures and reenactments of the history of salvation. In his eighth-century commentary on the Divine Liturgy, Germanos (Patriarch of Constantinople from AD 715 to 730) explains that

the church is an earthly heaven in which the super-celestial God dwells and walks about. It represents the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ . . . The apse corresponds to the cave in Bethlehem where Christ was born, as well as the cave in which he was buried . . . The holy table corresponds to the spot in the tomb where Christ was placed . . . The ciborium {a large canopy over the altar table} represents the place where Christ was crucified; for the place where he was buried was nearby and raised on a base. It is placed in the church in order to represent concisely the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ . . . The

[12]Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth, England, and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1979), 219.

[13]"A religious movement of the 8th and 9th c that denied the holiness of icons and rejected icon veneration . . ." Paul A. Hollingsworth and Alexander Kazhdan, "Iconoclasm," in Alexander Kazhdan, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 975–77. See also J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 30–68.

altar corresponds to the holy tomb of Christ . . . The ambo {a large, oval platform, supported by eight columns, located near the center of the nave} manifests the shape of the stone at the Holy Sepulcher [on which the angel sat after he rolled it away from the doors of the tomb], proclaiming the resurrection of the Lord to the myrrhbearing women.[14]

Positioning himself against the growing iconoclastic attitude, Germanos adopts the hermeneutical style of *historia* from Antioch and applies it to his own milieu.[15] Sociological and architectural developments that are not fully understood by modern historians resulted in a more privatized liturgy in smaller church buildings where the vertical axis took precedence over the horizontal.[16] The earthly dimension of the liturgy was minimized as the synthronon[17] disappeared, the altar was moved into the apse, and the chancel barrier grew into an opaque structure. "What had earlier been a public action taking place visibly in the midst of the congregation became now strictly the business of the clergy shut off in the eastern end of the church."[18]

[14]Paul Meyendorff, trans., *St Germanus of Constantinople: On the Divine Liturgy*, Popular Patristics Series No. 8 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 56–63. Clarifications in braces are taken from Meyendorff's notes. Bracketed material appears in Meyendorff's text.

[15]Taft, *Short History*, 46; idem, "The Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34–35 (1980–81): 45–75, at 72; Meyendorff, *Germanus*, 48.

[16]Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 125.

[17]A seating arrangement for clergy in the eastern apse, behind the altar. The bishop occupied an elevated throne in the middle, with presbyters sitting on curved benches on either side of him.

[18]Thomas F. Mathews, " 'Private' Liturgy in Byzantine Architecture: Towards a Re-Appraisal" *Cahiers archeologiques* 30 (1982): 125–38, at 126.

Liturgical action during this period became a privatized, clerical performance. A portable wooden lectern placed on the front step of the altar came to replace the monumental ambo. Liturgical actions were no longer performed in the midst of the congregation, but inside the sanctuary. What was happening on the streets and byways of Constantinople again set the tone for the city's liturgy: it "was gradually made ever more remote, untouchable, inaccessible, invisible."[19]

Iconoclasm was also the root cause for a watershed event in the history of Byzantine liturgy, the Studite Synthesis. In the last year of the eighth century monks of Sakkoudion emigrated from Bithynia in Asia Minor to Constantinople and took up occupancy in the dying Monastery of Stoudios.[20] Their abbot, Theodore, inaugurated a monastic reform that affected not only the empire, but also the entire Byzantine ecclesiastical legacy. Concerned with the iconoclastic threat to orthodoxy, Theodore wrote to Thomas, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, requesting that some monks from the Palestinian monastery of St Sabas be transferred to Constantinople to assist in the Iconodule campaign.[21] Theodore the Studite was familiar with the hymnographic tradition of St Sabas and thought that their compositions could be useful in defeating the Iconoclasts.

When Michael, Theodore Graptos, and Theophane Graptos came to Stoudios from St Sabas, they brought with them Palestinian liturgical practices. In this declining Constantinopolitan monastery, the usages of St Sabas were synthesized with liturgical

[19]Ibid., 127.

[20]Robert F. Taft, "Mt. Athos: A Late Chapter in the History of the Byzantine Rite" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988): 182; J.M. Hussey, "Byzantine Monasticism," in J.M. Hussey, ed., *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 4, 2nd ed., Pt 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 161–84, at 165.

[21]"Letter to Patriarch Thomas of Jerusalem," PG 99:1160–1164; "Letter to the Lavra of St Sabas," PG 99:1164–1168.

elements from the Great Church to produce "a hybrid Studite office [consisting of] a Palestinian horologion with its psalmody and hymns grafted onto a skeleton of litanies and their collects from the euchology of the Great Church."[22]

The victory over Iconoclasm was of fundamental importance in the development of Byzantine theology, but this ongoing conflict was not restricted to theology alone. Iconoclasm should be viewed in the larger context of the societal shift from the openness of public life to a more restricted individualistic life. Judging by their harsh treatment of monks, the Iconoclasts were concerned with crushing more than just the use of sacred images; they wanted to destroy the institution of monasticism. Iconoclasts, to some degree, were exploiting this theological dispute to negate monasticism, thereby strengthening marriage and family which served as the cornerstone for the emerging individualistic society of Byzantium.[23]

Nicaea II (AD 787) was confirmed and icons restored definitively on the first Sunday in Lent, 11 May 843, under Empress Theodora and Patriarch Methodius, both Iconodules. This was a victory not only for sacred images, but also for the monastic party that promoted them. Monks saw themselves as guardians of Orthodox faith and practice, vindicated by God, and entrusted with the task of ensuring rigorous observance of canon law and correct ecclesial practice.[24] Heartened by their victory and resulting advantage over secular clergy, monastics began to flex their liturgical muscle.

By the beginning of the second millennium, monastic liturgical practices had infiltrated most Byzantine churches, resulting in a

[22]Taft, "Mt. Athos," 179–94, at 182.
[23]Kazhdan and Constable, *People and Power*, 87.
[24]J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 64, 70.

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more "privatized" liturgy.[25] This means that although some semblance of the pure Constantinopolitan chanted rite, or *asmatic akolouthia*, remained in use at the Great Church and in other cathedrals like those of Thessalonica, most other communities had begun to follow Studite practices. We can observe some of the post-Iconoclasm dynamics in the propagation of Studite-influenced typika[26] (the earliest versions surviving only in Slavic manuscripts), a move motivated by Alexios, once abbot of the Stoudios monastery.

Additionally, following the Iconodule victory, the patriarchal throne of Constantinople was effectively reserved to monks. In December AD 1025, Alexios was appointed Patriarch of Constantinople, an office he maintained until AD 1043. In AD 1034 he founded a monastery of the Dormition near Constantinople and provided for it a detailed liturgical typikon based on the traditions of Stoudios. This, in turn, was copied and adopted by other monasteries beyond the empire.[27] The Studite Rite spread through the Christian world from Ukraine, Rus', and Muscovy to *Magna Graecia* in Southern Italy and Sicily.[28] Around the beginning of the eleventh century, we find evidence of Studite typika on Mount Athos, a rugged peninsula that became—and remains—the most important center of Orthodox monasticism. As monasteries received assistance from Constantinople, they also adopted Studite usages and passed them on to neighboring communities. One

[25]Mathews, "Private Liturgy," 127–35.

[26]A typikon (plural: typika) is a book containing rubrics and regulations for ordering liturgy within a particular monastery or church. See John Klentos, "The Typology of the *Typikon* as Liturgical Document" in Margaret Mullett and Anthony Kirby, eds., *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-century Monasticism* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1994), 294–305.

[27]See Alexander P. Kazhdan, "Alexios Stoudites," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), vol. 3, 67.

[28]Taft, *Short History*, 59.

result is the eleventh-century *Synaxarion of George Mt'acmindeli*, which survives in several Georgian manuscripts. Through strong monastic influence, even non-Byzantine churches begin to assume Studite characteristics.[29]

Studite liturgy was marked by three major characteristics. The first was the Palestinian division of psalmody. Rather than use the Psalter of Constantinople, which prescribed numerous musical refrains, the Studite rite utilizes the Jerusalem Psalter, which calls for the recitation of psalms as one piece.[30] A second characteristic was a profusion of hymnody in the services. Monastics from Stoudios and Sabas such as Sophronios, Andrew of Crete, John of Damascus, Theodore the Studite, and the two Graptoi made great contributions to the Byzantine corpus of hymns. Soon their compositions completely supplanted *kontakia*, the previously dominant poetical form in Constantinople.[31] The third mark was the structure of services. Studite typika omit the all-night vigil from Saturday to Sunday, which was standard in Sabaitic practice. The vigil was replaced with a less demanding sequence of services borrowed from the Great Church: compline, mesonyktikon, and orthros.[32] In the Studite configuration, the Palestinian horologion replaced the usual Constantinopolitan cycle of daily prayer.[33]

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[29]Taft, "Mt. Athos," 184–86.

[30]Robert F. Taft, "Christian Liturgical Psalmody: Origins, Development, Decomposition, Collapse," in H.W. Attridge and M.E. Fassler, eds., *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 7–32.

[31]Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 130.

[32]Taft, "Mt. Athos," 186.

[33]Miguel Arranz, "Les grandes étapes de la liturgie byzantine: Palestine-Byzance-Russie: Essai d'aperçu historique" in *Liturgie de l'église particulière et liturgie de l'église universelle: Conférences Saint-Serge*, XXIIe Semaine d'études

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, documents detailing the liturgical practices of the Constantinopolitan-Palestinian Studite synthesis made their way back to Palestine where they were embraced by the native monastics. The Palestinians, however, did not hesitate to modify the new Constantinopolitan services in order to make them more palatable to the stricter Sabaitic communities.[34] This revision of Studite practices resulted in the neo-Sabaitic tradition that continues to today in Byzantine churches.

Since Palestinian monks lived in lavras—monastic cells dispersed within a larger area—rather than in structured coenobitic communities located in a monastery proper, they usually gathered only for vigils. Remembering the Sabaitic predilection for all-night vigils, we are not surprised to find most reworking of the Studite rite occurring at the *agrypnia*, or all-night vigil.[35] To the already-established vigil containing a recitation of the entire Psalter, the Sabaitic monks added all nine odes of the Studite canon. Originally only two canticles were chanted each day, with three on Sunday. In Palestine the entire canon was incorporated into the Saturday night vigil. Subsequently all nine odes found their way into daily Orthros.[36]

Another neo-Sabaitic alteration was a substantial increase of the psalmody. According to Studite practice, the entire Psalter was

*liturgiques, Paris, 30 juin–3 juillet 1975*, Bibliotheca «Ephemerides Liturgicae»: Subsidia 7, ed. A.M. Triacca (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1976), 43–72, at 50f. See also Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning Today*, 2nd revised edition (Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993) and Juan Mateos, *Le Typicon de la Grande Eglise*, 2 vol, [= Orientalia Christiana Analecta 165–66] (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium, 1962–1963).

[34]Taft, *Short History*, 79.

[35]Taft, "Mt. Athos," 187–90.

[36]Taft, "Mt. Athos," 188f. Nicholas Egender, *La prière des heures: Hôrologion*, La prière des Églises de rite byzantin 1(Chevetogne: Editions de Chevetogne, 1975), 135f.

recited over the course of three weeks in the summer and once a week in the winter. Their burning zeal for psalms led the Palestinian monks to dispose of the light summer program, insert in its place the once-a-week schedule from winter, and formulate a new winter distribution by moving the traditional vesperal psalms to nocturnes and inserting a fixed block of psalmody at vespers.[37]

The neo-Sabaitic office made its way back to Constantinople and became quite popular for reasons that have not yet been clarified by historic research. Neo-Sabaitic material was incorporated into the typikon of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis and from there made its way into monasteries throughout the empire.[38] The monks of Mount Athos were quick to dispose of Studite practices in favor of the new Neo-Sabaitic system. Arranz has suggested that these ascetics found the more demanding *pensum* of psalmody, the longer services, and the stricter system of fasts strenuous and therefore appealing.[39]

Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica from AD 1416 to AD 1429, attributed the final preference and preeminence of the monastic office over the Cathedral rite to the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Crusaders on 13 April 1204:

> After Constantinople has been enslaved [by the Latin Conquerors], and the clergy driven out and settled elsewhere, these ceremonies were neglected; it became customary not to perform them, and when the clergy returned after many years,

[37] Taft, "Mt. Athos," 190. Mateos, "La psalmodie variable dans l'office byzantin" *Societas Academica Dacoromana Acta philosophica et theologica* 2 (1964): 327–39, at 335f.

[38] Taft, "Mt. Athos," 190; idem, *Short History*, 81. See Robert H. Jordan, trans., *The Synaxarion of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis*, 2 vol. (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2000–2005).

[39] Arranz, "Étapes," 68.

their practice ceased; from the one church [*Hagia Sophia*], as from a mother, this was handed on to the rest.[40]

The secular clergy of Constantinople who had managed to perpetuate some semblance of the Cathedral Rite were demoralized by the political defeat and unable to muster the personnel needed to celebrate the services proper to the Great Church.[41] Even the more streamlined Studite rite was passed over in favor of the simpler Neo-Sabaitic services.[42] Ultimately clergy found it more practical to celebrate services that could be conducted by only one person rather than services requiring a full cadre of priests, deacons, and singers. While nothing can be proven definitively, it is not unreasonable to posit that the ultimate displacement of the Cathedral Rite by the Neo-Sabaitic contributed to the abandonment of the office of Deaconess.[43]

From the time the Latin occupation ended in AD 1261 until the fall of the empire some 192 years later, the Church was guided by the powerful monastics. Despite the fact that Ottoman threats on the eastern borders drove the guiding center of monastic activity westward from Asia Minor into Greece, monastics continued to regulate the Empire's Church, which remained central to the life of the Byzantine people.[44] As the political foundation of Byzantium began to crumble and weaken terminally, monastic control actually strengthened; it was necessary for monastic foundations to assume more responsibility.

[40]Symeon of Thessalonike, *De sacro templo*, PG 155:325.
[41]Taft, *Short History*, 78. Oliver Strunk, "The Byzantine Office at Hagia Sophia" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 9–10 (1955–56): 177–202, at 177–79.
[42]Arranz, "Étapes," 68.
[43]Valerie A. Karras, "Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church" *Church History* 73 (2004): 272–316.
[44]Taft, *Short History*, 78.

In the fourteenth century, Barlaam, abbot of the Akataleptos Monastery, initiated an attack on the practices and underlying theology of hesychasm. The monks of Mount Athos, however, favored this method of quiet, solitary contemplation and continuous "prayer of the heart," so Barlaam's criticisms rallied the Athonites to theological battle. Under the guidance of Gregory Palamas, the individualistic Athonite hesychasts achieved ultimate victory over the more rigorously coenobitic monks who followed the Studite organization.[45] Hesychasts from Athos began to assume more power in the Church, taking with them the Neo-Sabaitic practices of the Holy Mountain.

Foremost among these Athonite hierarchs was Philotheos Kokkinos, who had been abbot of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos prior to being elected Patriarch of Constantinople in AD 1353. Deposed two years later, he assumed the throne again from AD 1364 to AD 1376. Perhaps the most enduring contributions of Patriarch Philotheos were his efforts toward standardization of the Byzantine Rite. He established in the Great Church the Neo-Sabaitic practices of Mount Athos. While abbot of the Great Lavra he also compiled manuals describing in detail how the Office and Liturgy were to be performed: *Diataxis tis hierodiakonias*[46] and *Diataxis tis Theias Leitourgias*.[47] During his second term as Patriarch, he initiated relationships with churches beyond the Greek-speaking world. Because of his prestige, Philotheos' prescriptions became the norm throughout the Byzantine liturgical world. By the fifteenth century, Neo-Sabaitic services had replaced the Studite in the Slavic churches. A century later, the

[45] Taft, "Mt. Athos," 191.
[46] PG 154.745-66.
[47] Panagiotes N. Trempelas, Αἱ τρεῖς Λειτουργίαι κατὰ τοὺς ἐν Ἀθήναις κώδικας, Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie (Athens, 1935), 1–16.

liturgical traditions of the Great Lavra had become standard practice in practically every Byzantine church in the world outside of Southern Italy. Philotheos' Diataxes were incorporated into printed books and, by the seventeenth century, had become the normative liturgical guides—up to and including today.[48]

Liturgical scholars of the late twentieth century have advanced discussion about liturgical change beyond notions of "right" and "wrong." Christian worship is now recognized as a complex structure of words and actions related to "everyday behavior, the use of space, material artifacts, and the practices of ordinary people."[49] The study of liturgical history reveals that current practices reflect past cultures. Furthermore, it implies that today's liturgies are influenced by modern culture and modern people's perception of reality. Just as Byzantine liturgy has been transmitted from past to present, so the analysis of it must shift from historical points of reference to modern perspectives.

## LAKOFF'S PERSPECTIVE ON UNDERSTANDINGS OF CHRISTIANITY

George Lakoff has proposed that in the realm of politics, conservatives and liberals are motivated to think, act, and speak in characteristic ways because of moral conceptual systems that are ultimately based on models of family that are fundamentally different. I will summarize his theory briefly, especially as it relates to Christianity, and explore its helpfulness for understanding current tensions within Orthodox churches.

[48]Taft, *Short History*, 82.
[49]Martin D. Stringer, *A Sociological History of Christian Worship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

## "Strict Father" Christianity

Lakoff describes a Strict Father orientation and worldview founded on the concept that life is a competitive struggle in which the strong survive. Evil is a reified reality that must be confronted and defeated. Individuals develop moral strength through obedience, self-discipline, and self-denial. Those who are not morally strong will eventually capitulate to evil, allowing it to triumph.

Utilizing a different metaphor, life is a self-propelled journey toward a specific destination. The path is well defined, with its route and parameters dictated by the Strict Father, based on his worldview (i.e., the particular tradition he has inherited and to which he has adhered). Any departure from this path is considered a deviation and immoral. Its immorality is intensified because a person setting out on a different path gives it an appearance of legitimacy and invites others to follow it. Following a deviant path, therefore, threatens the whole community.

Creation, according to this worldview, is structured hierarchically under the dominion of God:

God is more powerful (has moral authority over) people,
people are more powerful (have moral authority over) nature,
adults are more powerful (have moral authority over) children,
men are more powerful (have moral authority over) women,
the rich are more powerful (have moral authority over) the poor.

Such an understanding of reality requires that a person is morally obliged to subject him/her self to the greater authority. Those who possess greater authority, in turn, are morally obligated to reward compliance and to punish disobedience. According to this scheme, the Strict Father supports, protects, and guides his children who, by

submitting to his authority, develop their own moral strength. Strict Father morality is based on a system of reward and punishment: meeting the standards set by the authority figure are rewarded; failure to meet the standards deserves punishment. While still in the formative stages of life, a child must be rewarded to motivate positive growth and punished to discourage negative development. A person's ultimate moral essence is described as "character," which is developed in childhood and lasts a lifetime. It is possible to look at a person's actions and determine their character; knowing a person's character, it is possible to predict future actions. Again, actions (thus, character) are judged according to the standards set by the moral authority.

Applied to Christianity, this model of Strict Father morality emphasizes a God who will ultimately judge all people, rewarding those who possess a good character and are morally strong with eternal life in heaven, while punishing those who possess a bad character and are morally weak with an eternity in hell. Humans, by nature, are weak and susceptible to evil and must strive to develop the moral strength necessary to stand firm in the face of attacks by evil. Sin is understood as a moral debt inherited from Adam and Eve, impossible for any human to repay; only Jesus (who alone is without sin), by his passion and death, acquired the moral credit to cover humanity's debt. A Christian can take advantage of God's generous offer of salvation (by applying Jesus' moral credit to our moral debt) by repenting, accepting him as Lord, and following his commandments. Understood in this way, however, God's offer and Jesus' saving actions are not unconditional; they require the recipient to accept God's authority and commit to a process of developing a new character through self-discipline, self-denial, and obedience to God's authority.

This conception of Christianity is based on the assumption that

without the potential reward of eternal life in heaven, people would not have any incentive to follow God's commandments. Similarly, just as receiving a reward without earning it is not just, redemption without requiring a serious commitment from a person would be immoral. One need only recall Constantine the Great to find such a loophole: simply wait until you are on your deathbed to accept the offer of salvation.[50] Lakoff recognizes the threat of Final Judgment at any moment as a way of closing that loophole. We can add the possibility of sudden death as another incentive to accept God's offer of salvation (and concurrent submission to divine authority) as soon as possible.

### "Nurturant Parent" Christianity

This more gender-neutral model is based on the assumption that people are born good and, through parental nurturance, can grow to be better. Viewed from an evolutionary perspective, a species will survive and thrive if it can nurture its offspring to adapt within an ever-changing environment. Nurturance, then, is marked by empathy and responsibility. The goal is to help people develop an inner strength that will allow them to be self-conscious and to forge strong bonds of mutual respect and affection with others. Life is not competitive, but cooperative. Living as members of a community, people must develop their own talents, be empathetic enough with others to discern what would be most helpful to them, learn to recognize potential and devise strategies to realize it, and act responsibly toward all parties engaged in life together. Crucial to this is the concept of happiness; someone who is unhappy will be unable to help others achieve happiness.

50 A.H.M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 195–200.

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This model involves non-hierarchical relationships, with authority earned on the basis of a person's demonstrated ability to nurture. A person who exhibits wisdom, judgment, empathy, and an ability to communicate well, naturally develops the trust necessary to function as an authority figure. One learns to nurture not by following strict rules, but by experiencing nurturance from the parent figure.

Understood from this perspective, Nurturant Parent Christianity becomes quite different from Strict Father Christianity. Lakoff presents it as emphasizing the theological notion of Grace. Influenced by Orthodox theology[51], I would re-frame it using more Trinitarian language to highlight the role of the Holy Spirit:

> Grace (the Holy Spirit)
> is the expression of a parent's (God's) love
> entails the presence of the parent (God)
> entails the closeness of the parent (God)
> involves feeding that allows for growth
> involves healing
> results in happiness
> entails protection
> is not earned
> is given freely and unconditionally by the parent (God)
> must be accepted if a child is to receive its benefits
> must be experienced by someone if he or she will learn to provide it to others.

[51]Nikos A. Nissiotis, "The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology," in A.J. Philippou, ed., *The Orthodox Ethos: Essays in honor of the Centenary of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America* (Oxford, 1964), 32–69. Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity: Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999).

According to this scheme, sin is any non-nurturant act; Original Sin is the proclivity of people born into this fallen world to act in non-nurturing ways.[52] Lakoff explains that Perfect Nurturance is always a goal beyond our ability to achieve; it belongs only to God and we can acquire it only by being united with God. At this point, however, his theology reflects its Western context by explaining Christ's suffering as "paying off a moral debt," presenting Christ as merely an example of Perfect Nurturance, and describing sacramental Communion as incorporating Perfect Nurturance into a person. A higher Christology, more characteristic of Byzantine Christianity, would lead us to affirm that Jesus Christ is, in fact, the very incarnation of Perfect Nurturance (God), and that his suffering and death are self-giving love (an important dimension of nurturance) demonstrated in the extreme. Sacramental Communion is simply the continual reaffirmation and deepening of our incorporation into Christ that allows us to make his Perfect Nurturance a reality in our lives and in our communities.

Lakoff concludes his chapter on God with a concise summary of the two models:

> The two forms of Christianity assume very different views of human nature. Strict Father Christianity assumes folk behaviorism, that people function to get rewards and avoid punishments,

[52]Generally, the term "Original Sin" is not favored by Orthodox theologians because it connotes an anthropology emphasizing human depravity that is inconsistent with an Orthodox understanding of humans. Lakoff's definition of Original Sin here, however, is not incompatible with Orthodox theology. See Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, new edition (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 222–25. Maximos Aghiorgoussis, "Orthodox Soteriology" in John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias, eds., *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1992), 35–57. Nonna Verna Harrison, "Theosis as Salvation: An Orthodox Perspective" *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 429–43.

and that discipline and denial build character. Nurturant Parent Christianity, on the other hand, does not assume folk behaviorism or the need for discipline and denial to build character. Instead, it assumes that being nurtured builds the right kind of character (nurturant character) and that those who are nurtured will thereby incorporate nurturant instincts into them.

The two forms of Christianity assume different ideas of what a good person is. Strict Father Christianity assumes that a good person is one who is self-disciplined and self-reliant and who can function well in a hierarchy, someone who can obey strict orders from those above and give strict orders to those below—and enforce those orders with pain. Nurturant Parent Christianity sees a good person as one who is nurturant, one who can function well in interdependent situations, where social ties, communication, cooperation, kindness, and trust are essential.

Finally, the two forms of Christianity have very different understandings of what the world should be like so that such ideal persons can be produced. Strict Father Christianity requires that the world be competitive and survival difficult if the right kind of people (strong people) are to be produced and rewarded. Nurturant Parent Christianity requires that the world be as interdependent, nurturant and benign as possible, if the right kinds of people—nurturant people—are to be produced.[53]

## FIRST ATTEMPTS AT A SYNTHESIS

Modern liturgical scholars have only recently begun to study how actual women and men at prayer understand the liturgy in which

[53]Lakoff, *Moral Politics*, 261.

they participate.[54] What follows is my attempt to analyze some current points of contention between conservatives and liberals within Orthodox churches in the United States, using Lakoff's family models. I hope that these preliminary observations may prove helpful for framing future liturgical ethnographic research.

## Liturgy and Spirituality

Lakoff uses biblical texts as the springboard for his discussion of Christianity, no doubt because they are irrefutably the sole literary foundation for Protestant Christianity. For someone studying Orthodox Christianity, liturgical texts would function in a similar way. Byzantine hymns and prayers have remained relatively unchanged for centuries, giving voice and form to generations of Orthodox Christians throughout the world. They communicate theological truths through an array of metaphorical images expressed poetically. Because it is impossible to make sense of them by means of a literal reading, worshipers understand them by bringing "meaning across with [them] from [their] customary practices."[55] Although incorrect to label either a conservative or a liberal orientation "right" or "wrong," it is essential to recognize the roots (and shoots) of each perspective.

Someone holding a Strict Father worldview would be inclined toward individual and private participation in liturgy, concentrating upon their own engagement in prayer before icons and ritual activ-

[54]Two notable studies are Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999) and Mary E. McGann, *A Precious Fountain: Music in the Worship of an African American Catholic Community* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2004). See also Frank C. Senn, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).

[55]Graham Hughes, *Worship as Meaning: A Liturgical Theology for Late Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 81.

ity; they might be comfortable reciting personal prayers or the Jesus Prayer (aided by a prayer rope or prayer book) even while liturgy progresses around them. Conversely, those espousing a Nurturant Parent model would likely seek a communal experience—chanting, and entering a dialogue with the presbyteral prayers, joining their voices with others in proclaiming the responses, especially "Amen."

## Clergy and Laity

Strict Father Orthodox often view the presiding clergy as authority figures who represent God in the midst of the community. This Divine image may be enhanced by the Byzantine vesture of a hierarch, who presides from a throne, and wears a crown and holds a golden staff, which at once communicate pastoral authority and divine power. With pious gestures that represent their respect (and awe) for the hierarchical structure, these faithful bow deeply whenever clergy give a blessing upon or cense the congregation.

Nurturant Parent Orthodox are more inclined to view the clergy as members of the community who act "as their representative and mediator."[56] Their gestures of piety reflect reverence for sacred liturgical objects and are related to their responses to the liturgical texts (e.g., making the sign of the cross at the mention of a saint's name). Although accused by Strict Father Orthodox as being "Protestant" or "Congregational," their outlook toward the clergy may simply reflect their belief in a God who represents a nurturing parent.

## Texts, Language, and Piety

One of the fiercest current controversies in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese centers on the question of language used in worship.

[56]Nicholas Cabasilas, A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy, trans. J.M. Hussey and P.A. McNulty (London: SPCK, 1960), 45.

Should one use English or liturgical Greek? Here, two interrelated issues are involved: 1) use of an ancient liturgical language versus the vernacular, and 2) the audible or silent recitation of prayers by clergy. Some faithful advocate use of the vernacular and recitation of prayers out loud by presbyters; others outspokenly insist on the preservation of liturgical texts in their original language and the retention of the practice of inaudible prayers by the clergy.

Nurturant Parent Orthodox emphasize the importance of hearing the acts of salvation recalled, as well as related petitions made by the clergy on their behalf. Their orientation requires speaking to God and hearing about God in terms they understand, because open communication between a child and a loving parent represents a crucial dimension of their spiritual experience. The liturgy provides education about and communion with God, so Nurturant Parent Orthodox frame these matters as important issues of intelligibility. Through liturgy and the Church's texts, they learn more deeply about human authenticity, and they ritually celebrate their connection with God. "The meaning of a rite is communicated to the faithful primarily by the prayers of the celebration."[57] Their insistence on intelligible expression signifies their personal feelings of connectedness to the Divine, others, and creation. Commonly, they cite St Justinian the Great's Novella 137 as a binding obligation to recite prayers audibly:

> We order that all bishops and presbyters would perform the Divine Offering and the prayers proper to baptism, not in secret (*non in secreto*), but with such a voice which would be heard well by the faithful people (*sed cum ea voce, quae a fidelissimo populo exaudiatur*) so that the souls of the hearers would

[57] Baby Varghese, *West Syrian Liturgical Theology* (Hants, England: Ashgate, 2004), 16.

be brought to a greater piety, praise and blessing, because of them.[58]

The applicability of this ancient decree is obvious to them, and by invoking the authority of this great figure, they hope to persuade Strict Father adherents, who naturally respect authority. Nevertheless, more conservative Orthodox Christians consider Justinian to be a historical figure that has been superceded by the living authority of the Church and its living (monastic) standard-bearers.

Because of their perception of the human-Divine relationship, Strict Father Orthodox are apt to view liturgy as obligatory worship, offering prayers and sacrifice in fulfillment of a requirement. God's blessings represent rewards for properly complying with prescribed obligations. Tied to the performance-reward equation is a fear: if liturgy is not performed correctly, God will justifiably withhold the reward; or worse, knowing deviation from the received rite will incur divine punishment. Expressions of piety perpetuate the ritual as they have inherited it, thus ensuring the equilibrium between performance and reward.

Although seemingly simplistic in their perception, Strict Father Orthodox desire to ensure the power and preservation of the rite to which they strongly have entrusted their faith. Following their understanding, preservation of the original liturgical language becomes paramount, since translation necessarily requires textual change; not only would nuances be lost, but new concepts also might be introduced. More concretely, the incorporation of gender-inclusive language into liturgy—such as rendering the phrase δι᾽ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους from the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed as "for us all" or "for us humans" or simply "for us" instead of the more

[58] *Corpus iuris civilis* III: *Novellae* (Berlin: Apud Weidmannos, 1928), 695–99.

literal "for us men"—signifies the acceptance of modern understandings of sex and gender that may upset or frighten many adherents of a Strict Father worldview.

## Sermons/Homilies

Christians favoring a Strict Father model expect sermons that contain admonition and strict instruction about the lifestyle of a "good" Orthodox Christian, including topics such as the correct way to venerate icons, appropriate clothes for worship, and rules for fasting. Some preachers holding a Strict Father model present negative examples of impious behavior and reminders of godly punishment incurred by deviation from established norms. Strict Father Orthodox understand sermons as authoritative teaching and clear guidance about survival in a competitive world, in which the weak fall prey to the devil's wiles and thus forfeit the gift of heaven for eternal damnation. Again, an emphasis on maintaining right behavior in order to warrant reward strongly manifests itself.

Nurturant Parent Orthodox view the homily as a time to hear the gospel message of God's gratuitous, nurturing love; they listen for indications of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in their everyday lives and in the world around them. Preachers of this mindset act as guides, offering advice and encouragement, as fellow travelers on the path to eternal life. Since God is present here and now among believers, Nurturant Parent devotees expect sermons to evoke heartfelt love and thanksgiving, while providing admonition for them to make God's presence real in the world they inhabit. Again, divine encouragement, forgiveness, cooperation, and willingness to bear a common yoke distinguishes God's attitude toward humanity.

## Rubric Fidelity vs. Liturgical Reform

Since God's blessings, according to the Strict Father perspective, are dispensed for right behavior, the "proper" celebration of liturgical services consequently becomes paramount. Clergy, as authorities within the community, personally ensure that everything be done correctly, thus guaranteeing God's reward. Understandably concerned for fidelity to the rubrics, clergy who espouse the Strict Father model view deviation from this norm as unhealthy (at best) or (in extreme cases) deserving of punishment. Adherents of this model depend on ecclesiastical authorities, for through them, God has decreed how his faithful will offer him "right worship."

Nurturant Parent Orthodox are more apt to see rubrics as guidelines established in a particular context, which may be altered as the environment changes.[59] Understanding liturgy as ritualized encounter between God and humanity, they believe dynamic encounter requires liturgical flexibility. From their perspective, liturgy represents a form of communicative interaction that a person applies to concrete situations. Still, Nurturant Orthodox communities would not undertake liturgical change indiscriminately, but rather be guided by pastoral need. As long as liturgical conventions are maintained, and established metaphors are not altered irresponsibly, Nurturant Parent Orthodox view liturgical change as both healthy and necessary. Liturgical evolution would not signal abandonment of the tradition, but would indicate adaption to ever-changing life-environments, in order to remain faithful to the essential core of the Orthodox tradition.

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[59]Robert F. Taft, *Through Their Own Eyes: Liturgy as the Byzantines Saw It* (Berkeley, CA: InterOrthodox Press, 2006), 160–70.

## Baptism and Confession

The theological divide between Strict Father and Nurturant Parent Orthodox becomes especially apparent in the stress placed upon the sacraments of Baptism and Confession. Strict Father adherents assume the father-child relationship between God and believer; therefore, they expect to be held accountable for their sinful actions and to receive forgiveness, but with accompanying "punishment" in the form of ritual penance. They believe sinful action always merits punishment from a just God who dispenses it, if not at Confession, then at the Final Judgment. For Strict Father Orthodox, forgiveness of sins occurs only within the context of a moral accounting, and Confession provides a "preliminary audit" that allows for reconciliation during this lifetime. Such rigor may lead to their requiring their spiritual father to act not only as a temporal authority figure, but also as an auditor working on behalf of God! Strict Father Orthodox hide nothing from him, withhold nothing. Some believe in complete obedience to their priest-confessor, in order to appease a Strict Father God.

Nurturant Parent Orthodox perceive God's fostering love as bestowed definitively at Baptism, when God accepted them as a sinful person and grafted them as a renewed person onto the life-giving tree (or vine), which is Christ. Their initiation into the Church defined an ontological moment, after which God's love continues to nurture their growth, unto full realization of their potential as sons and daughters of the kingdom. According to the human-Divine relational model they espouse, Confession acts as an evaluation that recognizes "growing edges" and offers suggestions for better achieving the ideal: the fullness of the stature of Christ.

## Eucharist: Food vs. Reward

All Orthodox Christians, regardless of their orientation, accept the Eucharist as immediate and intimate connection with God, through reception of the Body and Blood of Christ. Nurturant Parent types, however, view Holy Communion as a necessary dimension of their life in Christ. Having been united with Christ through the rites of initiation, they receive spiritual food for their continued growth as an absolute necessity, understanding the Eucharist as both food and medicine that facilitates their spiritual development. They absorb the Anaphora of St John Chrysostom, which states that the fruits of Communion include "vigilance of soul, forgiveness of sins, communion of [God's] Holy Spirit, fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven, confidence before [God], and not in judgment or condemnation," and faithfully stake their claim on this. Acknowledging their spiritual immaturity and shortcomings, Nurturant Parent Orthodox nevertheless trust in a loving God to bear with them and to nurture them in their growth.

However, in their formation, Strict Father Orthodox have been taught to consider union with God as the ultimate reward for a life lived in accordance with spiritual laws. They see sins as debts to be settled before reward can be claimed. According to their understanding, sacramental Confession (and any resulting penance) becomes prerequisite for reception of the consecrated gifts. Within their formulation, God does not ignore their human weaknesses; rather, their weaknesses and failings accuse them even more within their intimate union with God.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

I am persuaded that Lakoff's analysis of Christian orientation based on fundamental models of family relations provides a key for understanding the current tension between two prominently diverse approaches to liturgical change within the Orthodox Church. To further our study, we would need data from ethnographic analyses, to test scientifically the relationship between family models, church behavior, and viewpoints on liturgical practice. Nevertheless, Lakoff's insight both explains "liberal" and "conservative" points of contention, and also sheds light on how Orthodox Christians hear, experience, and make sense of worship. Since worldview and mindset seem to determine popular understanding of liturgical texts and their application, Orthodox communities in the United States naturally will struggle to integrate the Strict Father and Nurturant Parent perspectives in their communities. Understanding the underlying mindsets of Orthodox Christians may be helpful in designing catechetical materials and in discussing possible changes in a parish's liturgical life.

Moreover, perhaps we could address our apparent conflicts most effectively not by appeal to authority—e.g., refuting canon with canon—but by appreciating the dynamic history of Byzantine worship and viewing modern practice as part of a constantly changing liturgical tradition. Christian worship has always been a product of humans living in community. They have developed a ritual of remembrance, petition, and praise based on their particular worldview. As Orthodox Christianity continues to grow and develop in the United States, the worldview of modern Americans will affect liturgical practice, for not only does liturgy reflect a particular culture, it also forms future culture. Thus, crucially important for scholars within the Church is to study how Orthodox Christians think, and

how their conceptual systems impact the Church's remembrance, understanding, celebration, and proclamation of God's saving work in the world.

# LEARNING ABOUT OURSELVES: A SNAPSHOT OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Eleni Makris

## INTRODUCTION

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA) endorsed the Orthodox Church's participation in a one-of-a-kind, revolutionary study that attempted to document religiosity and its practices as they exist within the United States. This groundbreaking survey was intended to correspond to the United States government's national census and the new millennium. The Faith Communities Today (FACT) and the Cooperative Congregations Study Project (CCSP) was the largest and most denominationally inclusive survey of religious congregations ever conducted in the United States. Funded by the Lilly Endowment and housed in the Hartford Institute for Religious Research at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, forty-four religious bodies (see Figure 1) and more than 14,000 congregations responded to the FACT survey.

Figure 1: Participating Bodies in FACT

1.  American Baptist Churches USA
2.  Assemblies of God
3.  Baha'is of the United States
4.  Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
5.  Christian Reformed Church
6.  Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
7.  Church of the Nazarene
8.  Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental)
9.  Episcopal Church
10. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
11. Historically Black Denominations
    a. African Methodist Episcopal Church
    b. African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
    c. Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
    d. Church of God in Christ
    e. National Baptist Convention of America
    f. National Baptist Convention U.S.A.
    g. Progressive National Baptist Convention
12. Independent Christian Churches (Instrumental)
13. Jewish (Cohen Center)
    a. Conservative Jewish
    b. Reform Jewish
14. Mega-churches
15. Mennonite Church USA
16. Muslim (CAIR)
17. Nondenominational
18. Orthodox Christian (SCOBA)
    a. Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America
    b. American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek
       Catholic Diocese

      c. Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of
        North America

      d. Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

      e. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

      f. Orthodox Church in America

      g. Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and
        Canada

      h. Serbian Orthodox Church in America

      i. Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

19. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
20. Reformed Church in America
21. Roman Catholic Church
22. Seventh-day Adventist Church
23. Southern Baptist Convention
24. Unitarian Universalist Association
25. United Church of Christ
26. United Methodist Church

As the new millennium began, the study's intent was to provide a profile of religion as it was practiced within the United States. The survey intended to document cross-denominational practices in six broad areas: 1) worship and identity, 2) location and facilities, 3) internal and mission oriented programs, 4) leadership and organizational dynamics, 5) participants, and 6) finances. The CCSP provided a core set of questionnaire items that were mutually agreed upon by SCOBA and the CCSP.

While the core questionnaire contained 190 items, supplemental questions were also added to the survey that was sent to the Orthodox churches in order to capture their unique interests and concerns. It was the responsibility of each religious group participating in the study to survey a representative sample of their con-

gregations using the core questionnaire. The data provided by the participating Orthodox congregations from the core questionnaire was given to CCSP for entry into their national database. The survey was able to gather a great deal of information about how the participating Orthodox Church jurisdictions in the United States function and worship today. The data relevant to the Orthodox Church is presented for the first time in this study. In addition to providing an overview of the overall CCSP findings, this article will reveal the Orthodox participants' responses in the areas of parish infrastructure, worship practices, parish participation, language usage, leadership dynamics, congregational conflict, and recruitment efforts.

## COOPERATIVE CONGREGATIONS STUDY PROJECT (CCSP) CROSS-DENOMINATIONAL FINDINGS

As appears within the CCSP's numerous publications, the following section contains a summary of the project's most compelling findings across denominations. These analyses and findings have been produced within FACT and have been calculated from the totality of denominational responses to the core questionnaire.

### Denominational Affiliations

In America almost anyone, any denomination, or any entity can establish a place of worship anywhere they wish. However, FACT results surprisingly show that approximately 62% of congregations surveyed expressed a strong denominational tie (Thumma, 2007). These denominationally affiliated congregations tended to report strong racial, ethnic and national identities and described "them-

selves as preserving a strong racial/ethnic or national heritage" (Thumma, 2007). Being the least likely to change their worship style, these denominationally affiliated congregations refer to historic creeds, traditions, and doctrines as sources of religious authority. In addition to being rooted in doctrine and tradition, having a denominational affiliation is also economically important to the place of worship, as those congregations that claim a strong denominational heritage tend to buy their worship materials "primarily" or "only" from within their own denominations, thus supporting and strengthening their own economic base. It is also of note that while these religious groups are the most consistent in worship style, "the more emphasis a congregation gives to the values of home and personal religious practices, the higher the congregation's vitality and the more likely it is to be growing in membership" (Rozen, 2007). Therefore, while some vital congregations may emphasize tradition and creed, the results show that the growth of a congregation depends upon the emphasis given to individual daily religious practices carried out personally and within the home.

## Ecumenical and Interfaith Involvement

The study also attempted to understand cross-denominational interaction by noting two types of involvement, ecumenical and interfaith. Ecumenical involvement most frequently included worship practices, while interfaith involvement included outreach projects and clergy associations. "Catholic and Orthodox Christian congregations, along with Liberal and Moderate Protestants, are the most active Christian participants in ecumenical activities, including participation in local councils" (Thumma, 2007), which included churches, synagogues, and mosques among others. Interestingly, Liberal Protestant churches, Catholic and Orthodox

parishes, and "World" religious groups (Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, and Baha'i) each reported higher interfaith interaction than Moderate or Conservative Protestant Christian groups.

## Community Outreach

Over 90% of congregations reported that they reach out to those in need within their congregations and community. "In this nearly universal practice of caring, congregations with widely different beliefs from many locations respond in moments of personal need with cash (88%), food (85%), clothing (60%), shelter (38%), medical attention (45%) and crisis counseling (46%)" (Dudley, 2007). Roughly one-third of these churches, synagogues and mosques reported housing and supporting programs in day care (36%), tutoring (32%), senior citizen services (45%), employment assistance (21%), and migrant or immigrant outreach (14%). Some congregations also engaged in prison ministries (38%), drug rehabilitation (33%), issue advocacy (29%), and voter education (26%). It is noteworthy to report that while many of these programs are supported and sustained by the congregations, the programs are most often organized by trained leaders and maintained by dedicated volunteers. Therefore, outreach programs are most successful when individuals who have expertise in these areas are willing to share this expertise by taking a leadership role in establishing the program. The programs are then maintained and run by others in the congregation who might not have the expertise but are willing to volunteer their time to ensure the success of these outreach programs.

## Congregational Conflict

Common across religions is the report of congregational conflict. Surprisingly, 75% of all congregations reported some form of con-

flict occurring within the past five years (Dudley, 2007). The disagreements typically ranged from theological beliefs to the manner in which funds were raised and spent. Denominations also reported conflict occurring over worship practices, mission priorities, lay decision-making and pastoral leadership styles. While lay decision-making was the most frequently reported type of conflict (69%), conflict over pastoral leadership garnered the most emotional intensity among congregants.

## LEARNING ABOUT ORTHODOXY

Now that a snapshot of multiple congregations that appear across the United States has been offered, this section will begin the analysis of the responses offered by those Orthodox parishes participating in the study.

### Subjects and Methodology

As this was an attempt to gather information from all existing canonical Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States, SCOBA provided complete lists of all churches under their jurisdiction to be included in the study. Since resources were limited, a stratified random sampling of the jurisdictions was performed in the sample selection. This type of sampling was to ensure that those jurisdictions that had a small number of parishes were given the same voice and were equally represented as those that had more parishes. Table 1 lists the ten Orthodox jurisdictions that were included in the study and shows the population or total number of parishes (N=1479) that SCOBA reported having within the multiple jurisdictions. Also noted in the table is the sample rate or total amount of parishes

(N=1400) within each jurisdiction that received a survey. In other words, the questionnaire was sent to almost every Orthodox parish in the United States. Only 79 Orthodox parishes in the United States that are within the jurisdictions represented by SCOBA did not receive a survey. Three hundred and forty-five (N=345) parishes returned completed surveys. Table 1 shows the response rate by jurisdiction as well as the percentage return rate by jurisdiction. The overall response return rate of 24.6% is perfectly acceptable and within normal parameters of survey methodology. This indicates that the findings are representative of the study participants and all canonical Orthodox jurisdictions which are members of SCOBA.

Table 1: Orthodox Jurisdictions Participating in Study

| Jurisdiction | Total Population | Total Sample | Total Returned | Response Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Albanian Orthodox | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0% |
| Antiochian Orthodox | 196 | 179 | 68 | 38% |
| Bulgarian Orthodox | 11 | 11 | 1 | 9% |
| Carpatho-Russian | 76 | 70 | 23 | 33% |
| Greek Orthodox | 526 | 480 | 132 | 28% |
| Orthodox Church of America | 466 | 428 | 91 | 21% |
| Russian Orthodox | 54 | 54 | 5 | 9% |
| Serbian Orthodox | 113 | 112 | 8 | 7% |
| Ukrainian Orthodox | 102 | 95 | 18 | 19% |
| Ukrainian Orth Church in America | 10 | 10 | 2 | 20% |
| Totals | 1479 | 1400 | 345 | |

## ORTHODOX FINDINGS

While the data collected supports higher level and more advanced statistical analysis, the findings presented in this study will primarily be shown in percentages in order to facilitate wider use of the results and to avoid inadvertently revealing the identity of various jurisdictional responses.

### Parish Infrastructure

Staying consistent with the CCSP inquiry, participants were asked to list the year in which the various respondents' parishes were established. This information is valuable as it allows one to determine how grounded Orthodoxy is within America and to what extent there has been a need for additional places of worship to be built. To determine this information, the following question was asked: "In what year was your parish founded/established?" Results appearing in Table 2 show that over 50% of Orthodox parishes which exist in the United States and which participated in this survey were established before 1940. The following three decades saw a moderate increase in the establishment of parishes, with the decade of the 1970s reporting an 11% increase in newly established Orthodox parishes. The peak of modern establishment occurred during the decade of the 1970s and has given way to a slow decline in the overall number and percentage of Orthodox parishes being established within the United States since then. The final decade of the last millennium saw the fewest number of churches being established.

Table 2: Yearly Establishment of Orthodox Parishes

| Year | N | Percentage |
|------|-----|------------|
| Pre–1900 | 10 | 2.9 |
| 1901–1910 | 47 | 13.5 |
| 1911–1920 | 54 | 15.6 |
| 1921–1930 | 35 | 10.0 |
| 1931–1940 | 41 | 11.8 |
| 1941–1950 | 16 | 4.6 |
| 1951–1960 | 20 | 5.8 |
| 1961–1970 | 28 | 8.1 |
| 1971–1980 | 38 | 11.0 |
| 1981–1990 | 32 | 9.2 |
| 1991–2000 | 26 | 7.5 |

It is important not to assume that the year in which a given parish was established also refers to the year in which that parish church was built or inhabited. Many parishes have been established in places not traditionally considered as churches. For example, many parishes have been established in schools, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and so forth, and later inhabited or built the structures that were to ultimately serve as their church. To determine the present physical condition of the parishes' current church buildings, the following question was asked: "How would you describe the overall physical condition of your parish's buildings?" This question is important to ask because a large amount of resources is typically needed to fix, maintain, or enhance church infrastructures, and knowing this information might give some indication about future financial needs. Encouragingly, a quarter (N=90 or 26.2%) described their overall physical condition as "excellent." The majority (N=150 or 43.7%) described their church's condition as "good,"

while another quarter (N=87 or 25.4%) noted that their church "needs improvement." A small number (N=16 or 4.7%) stated that their situation was dire and that their church is "in serious need of improvement."

To determine how adequately the current church building serves the needs of the parish, the question, "How adequate is your worship space?" was asked. Encouragingly, almost half of those respondents (N=162 or 47.2%) stated that their worship space was "about right" and adequately served their needs. About one quarter (N=87 or 25.2%) stated that their current space was "much more or slightly more than we need," while another quarter (N=95 or 27.6%) stated that their current space was "slightly less or much less than we need." That over a quarter of churches responded that the current space was less than what is needed may hint at the need for expansion of current church complexes or the necessity to establish new churches within the area to serve more parishioners. This might signal a need for expansion of new Orthodox churches.

One-fourth of the churches stated that they needed more space. While Orthodox parishes can be found throughout the entire United States, currently the majority of Orthodox churches are located in cities that boast growing populations. To determine the location of Orthodox parishes, the following question was asked: "How would you describe the place where your parish's primary worship building is located?" Less than 20% described their location as outside cities (N=16 or 4.7% reside in rural areas, and N=43 or 12.5% reside in towns with less than 10,000 residents). The vast majority described their churches as residing in cities (N=84 or 24.4% in cities with populations between 10,000 to 49,999 residents; N=99 or 28.7% in cities with 50,000 to 249,999 residents; and N=103 or 29.7% in cities with 250,000 or more residents.) As these cities continue to grow and expand, the need for additional

church space or even the need for newly established parishes may increase as well.

## Parish Worship and Participants

Having an understanding of the infrastructure and primary location of the Orthodox parishes, it is also important to understand the habits of those parishioners who attend Orthodox churches. To understand attendance habits of parishioners, the following question was asked: "About how full is your church on a typical Sunday?" The responses from survey participants are encouraging. Only 54 respondents or 15.8% noted that their church was less than 40% full. Eighty-two respondents or 24% reported their church services being 41% to 60% full, while 87 respondents or 25.4% reported services being 61% to 80% full. More than one third of the respondents (N=119 or 34.8%) reported their church being more than 80% full on a typical Sunday, clearly indicating that parishioners are attending Sunday services regularly at these respondents' parishes.

While more than half of all respondents reported that their churches are more than 61% full on a typical Sunday, it is also of interest to determine how many participants were actively participating in the liturgy by receiving Holy Communion. This prompted the inclusion of the following question, "How often do your parishioners typically receive Holy Communion?" The vast majority (N=230 or 70%) responded that their parishioners receive Holy Communion every week. Sixty-nine participants or 21% reported that their parishioners receive Holy Communion monthly, and only 30 respondents or 9% reported their parishioners receiving Holy Communion only on major holidays. These results seem to indicate that receiving Holy Communion in the Orthodox parishes of the United States is occurring frequently and has become a common

practice among the majority of churches and their participants.

In addition to knowing typical Sunday church attendance, also interesting is knowing how far people travel to attend church. To assess this, the following question was asked: "Of the total number of regularly participating adults, what percentage would you estimate are commuting more than fifteen (15) minutes to get to your services?"

Table 3: Commuting more than Fifteen Minutes to Church Services

| Response | N | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Under 10% | 26 | 8.1 |
| Few or 11–20% | 40 | 12.5 |
| Some or 21–40% | 63 | 19.7 |
| Many or 41–60% | 99 | 30.9 |
| Most 61–80% | 61 | 19.1 |
| Nearly all or 81–100% | 31 | 9.7 |

The majority of those adults who typically attend church are driving more than fifteen minutes to get there. This is interesting information because even though driving long distances does not seem to affect attendance at a typical Sunday service, it may adversely affect church programmatic participation on other days, as participants may not be able to easily or quickly reach their church.

## Liturgical Language Usage

It is commonly known that some of the first Orthodox churches established in the contiguous United States were begun by immigrants attempting to transplant and continue their faith traditions in their newfound land. Many of those early parishes served immi-

grant populations whose primary languages were those of their respective countries of origin. These pioneer immigrants spoke very little, if any, English. As the Orthodox churches increased in numbers and grew to serve future generations as well as non-immigrant populations, a natural and necessary debate occurred over the primary language used during worship. In some parishes today, this remains a spirited debate. To understand how current parishes are using language, the following question was asked: "Please list the primary language that your parish uses to conduct worship services on a typical Sunday." While liturgical language is still a heavily debated topic in some churches today, interestingly the overwhelming majority of parishes (N=257 or 74.3%) conduct their services primarily in English. The remainder (N=89 or 25.7%) use other primary languages, which they identified as Arabic, Greek, Romanian, Serbian, Spanish, and Ukrainian.

It was necessary for the earliest Orthodox parishes that were established in the contiguous United States to maintain their ethnic ties in order to serve the needs of their immigrant populations. Preserving ethnic identity was often done by having the parish conduct the worship services in its native language, serving as a community center, offering language classes to its children, observing the holidays of the country of origin, and other such practices. Since language and national identity are so closely linked and since the majority of respondents have stated that their primary language during worship services is English, it would likewise not be surprising to find that a majority of parishes were limited in their efforts to preserve any racial/ethnic or national identity. To determine if this was a correct assumption, the following question was posed: "How well does your parish try to preserve its racial/ethnic or national identity?" Almost half of the respondents (N=160 or 48.5%) reported that they do not attempt to preserve their racial/eth-

nic or national identity by responding "slightly or not at all." A quarter (N=83 or 25.2%) reported that they are ambivalent or "somewhat" attempt to retain their racial/ethnic or national identity, while another quarter (N=87 or 26.3%) reported their attempt to do so as "very well or quite well." The assumption is that the quarter of parishes that are still conducting their typical Sunday church services primarily in a foreign language are also the ones that are stridently attempting to maintain their racial/ethnic or national identity.

## Church Leadership

While it is important to understand the profile of those who participate or attend church services, it is equally important to understand the characteristics of church leadership. According to Orthodox ecclesiology and tradition, the leader in each individual Orthodox parish is the current or senior priest who serves as the representative of the local bishop. To understand the current status of Orthodox parish leaders, the following question was asked: "Please describe the current (senior) priest's age." Table 4 shows the results of this question. Over half of the Orthodox priests are described as under 50 years of age, with the largest percentage of clergy between ages 41 and 50. Around a quarter (23.2%) of the parishes' leaders are 61 years of age or older.

Table 4: Current or Senior Clergy's Age

| Clergy Age | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 20–30 | 6 | 1.8 |
| 31–40 | 48 | 14.5 |
| 41–50 | 122 | 36.9 |
| 51–60 | 78 | 23.6 |
| 61–70 | 62 | 18.7 |
| 71+ | 15 | 4.5 |

In attempting to determine the level of education that the Orthodox parishes' current or senior priest has, the survey posed the following question: "Please describe the current (senior) priest's ministerial educational level." While only 9% reported no ministerial education or only receiving a ministerial certificate, 26.1% reported attending some but not completing seminary. The majority (64.9%) reported completing graduate ministerial degrees or higher.

Table 5: Clergy Ministerial Education Level

| Educational Level | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| None | 6 | 2.1 |
| Certificate | 21 | 6.9 |
| Some seminary | 80 | 26.1 |
| Seminary Masters Degree | 147 | 48.0 |
| Post-Seminary Masters Degree | 52 | 16.9 |

To further describe the current (senior) clergy, the respondents were asked to respond to the core stem phrase, "Please describe whether the . . . (the end of each sentence is embedded within Table 6).

Table 6: Clergy Information

| Category | No | | Yes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| ...current/senior priest is celibate." | 294 | 91.0 | 29 | 9.0 |
| ...parish has an assistant priest." | 228 | 88.1 | 38 | 11.9 |
| ...current/senior priest has ever taken a sabbatical." | 312 | 96.6 | 11 | 3.4 |

Some of the reasons offered by current/senior priests for why they have never taken a sabbatical are: 1) the church at which these priests serve cannot afford to provide them with a paid sabbatical (18.2%); 2) the priests are too busy, cannot spare the time away because their church would be negatively impacted, and if a sabbatical was taken this would ultimately result in more work for the priests upon their return (16.5%); 3) there is no need for a sabbatical, they do not want one or they receive adequate vacation time (14.7%); 4) there are no substitute priests to serve the church and continue their ministry (11.2%); 5) the priests do not know why they have not asked for a sabbatical but clearly feel that they need one and should ask for one (11.2%); 6) the priests are not eligible for sabbatical because they have not served within the parish long enough (11.2%); 7) the archdiocesan regulations do not provide for a sabbatical (9.4%); and 8) the congregation would not be open to the idea of a priestly sabbatical (7.6%).

## Congregational Conflict

To determine how Orthodox parishes compare with other religions in terms of conflict, the following question was posed: "During the

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last five years has your parish experienced any disagreements or conflicts in the following areas?" Table 7 presents some of the findings.

Table 7: Orthodox Parish Conflict

| Category | No | | Yes | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Percentage | N | Percentage |
| How worship is conducted | 228 | 67.9 | 108 | 32.1 |
| Language usage | 201 | 59.6 | 136 | 40.4 |
| Who should make decisions | 171 | 51.4 | 162 | 48.6 |
| Priest's leadership style | 188 | 56.6 | 144 | 43.4 |
| Priest's personal behavior | 253 | 75.5 | 82 | 24.5 |
| Co-priest's personal behavior | 255 | 90.7 | 26 | 9.3 |
| Cantor's behavior | 259 | 78.7 | 70 | 21.3 |
| Members' personal behavior | 161 | 48.2 | 173 | 51.8 |
| Program emphases or priorities | 205 | 61.7 | 127 | 38.3 |
| Board meetings | 139 | 41.4 | 197 | 58.6 |
| Parking | 235 | 69.9 | 101 | 30.1 |
| Church's archdiocesan dues | 169 | 50.6 | 165 | 49.4 |
| Building projects | 152 | 45.4 | 182 | 54.6 |
| Parish festivals | 213 | 63.4 | 123 | 36.6 |
| Sports/basketball | 287 | 86.4 | 45 | 13.6 |

Respondents reported the lowest forms of parish conflict within the categories of the co-priest's behavior (90.7% reported that no conflicts occurred within this category) and with sports/basketball (86.4% reported that no conflicts occurred within this category). The highest levels of conflict are reported within the categories of board meetings (58.6% reported conflicts occurred within this cat-

egory); building projects (54.6% reported conflicts occurred within this category); other church members' behavior (51.8% reported conflicts occurred within this category); and archdiocesan dues (49.4% reported conflicts occurred within this category). Interestingly, while the priest is the primary leader of the parish according to Orthodox ecclesiology and tradition, 48.6% report that there is conflict regarding who should be making decisions.

## Recruitment of New Members

The growth and future of the church is built upon membership amount and involvement. Without doubt, the vast majority of the Orthodox Church's membership rests with those families and generations that have been born into or are marrying into the Orthodox faith. However, as other religious denominations grow, reach out, and convert more and more people, it must become of central importance that the Orthodox Church participate in some form of recruitment if it would continue to grow and flourish. At some point, merely being born into an Orthodox family will not suffice in maintaining or growing the number of participants in the faith.

To determine the extent of current recruitment practices, several questions were posed. The question "Are efforts made to provide special parking or seating for visitors to your church?" was added to determine whether a special place had been designated specifically for their attendance, thus making them feel welcome. The overwhelming majority reported negatively (N=246 or 74.3%), thus leaving only one quarter to respond in the affirmative (N=85 or 25.7%).

When visitors do attend church services, outreach from those within the parish is often paramount to visitors' continued attendance. To determine the amount of outreach that occurs regularly,

the parishes were asked the following question: "About how many visits or phone calls to prospective members, worship visitors, or newcomers in the community does the ministerial staff of your church make in an average month?"

Table 8: Frequency of Visits or Calls to Prospective Members

| Number of calls | N | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| None | 76 | 27.2 |
| 1 call | 40 | 14.3 |
| 2 calls | 48 | 17.2 |
| 3 calls | 26 | 9.3 |
| 4 calls | 12 | 4.3 |
| 5 calls | 24 | 8.6 |
| 6–10 calls | 30 | 10.9 |
| 11–15 calls | 17 | 6.1 |
| 16 or more calls | 8 | 2.1 |

The results are eye opening. Of all the parishes that responded to the survey, over one quarter (27.2%) report that during an average month no outreach visits or phone calls were made to prospective members. Another 31.5% reported that only one or two outreach visits or phone calls were made during an average month. Therefore, clearly the majority of Orthodox parishes are making very few, if any, visits or phone calls in order to reach out to prospective members, worship visitors, or newcomers in the community.

While the previous question and responses measured ministerial behavior and outreach, one could reasonably argue that the ministerial staff of the church is so busy attending to the daily matters of the parish that they have little time to devote to this type of outreach. Therefore, this is clearly an instance where the services

and help of the general parish membership could be of tremendous assistance. To understand how important this responsibility is and to determine the general parish membership's attitude regarding this issue, the following question was posed: "To what extent are your church members involved in recruiting new members?"

Table 9: Amount of Church Members Involved in Recruiting New Members

|  | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Almost all | 7 | 2.1 |
| Most | 31 | 9.3 |
| Some | 121 | 36.4 |
| Few | 129 | 38.9 |
| None | 44 | 13.3 |

Again, the overwhelming majority of church members are not involved in reaching out to prospective members. The numbers are even more dismal when considering recruitment of members of a different race or ethnicity. To determine this, the following question was asked: "To what extent are your church members involved in recruiting new members of a different race or ethnicity?"

Table 10: Extent of Member Involvement in Recruiting Diverse Members

|  | N | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Very great effort | 4 | 1.2 |
| Large effort | 12 | 3.6 |
| Some effort | 57 | 17.3 |
| Slight effort | 124 | 37.7 |
| Not at all | 132 | 40.2 |

In the efforts of Orthodox parishes to recruit new members of a different race or ethnicity, not even 5% make a large or very great effort to reach out to those who are racial/ethnically diverse from the Orthodox Church's traditional populations. In fact, more than 75% make little or no effort to reach out to people of a different race or ethnicity. These numbers clearly show that very little, if any, attempt is being made to increase the racial or ethnic diversity of Orthodox parish memberships. In this era where other Christian denominations have entire departments devoted to outreach and the increase of its membership, the present study's numbers should be of serious concern to everyone in the Orthodox Church.

## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The results of this survey provide a wealth of information regarding how Orthodox parishes in the United States are currently functioning, while also suggesting issues that may lead to further inquiry. The findings of the study showed that from the end of the 1970s, there has been a slow decline in the overall number and percentage of Orthodox parishes being established within the United States. In fact, the final decade of the last millennium showed the fewest number of parishes being established. On their own, these numbers raise concern. However, when these low numbers are considered in conjunction with the findings regarding limited parish outreach to prospective members, as well as with the findings regarding little outreach to those prospective members of various racial or ethnic groups, these numbers are a call for attention and action. These findings could be used by the Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States under the leadership of SCOBA to consider paths of development so that parishes might increase outreach

among prospective members and among those of different racial and ethnic groups. These data also allude to the need for discussion regarding the establishment new parishes in carefully studied, strategic locations. In this way, the establishment of new Orthodox parishes in the United States could be done proactively in ways that maximize growth.

The survey also asked the length of time needed for Orthodox Christians to reach their parishes, with the majority stating that they drove more than fifteen minutes to attend their church services. Intuitively, these findings may indicate that more Orthodox parishes need to be established in closer vicinity to better serve Orthodox Christians. However, the study did not ask whether or how many other Orthodox churches (either in the same or different jurisdictions) are passed on the way to attend one's own parish. This common practice of "church skipping" occurs with great frequency but has yet to be systematically documented within the Orthodox Church. Further research needs to be done to understand the reasons why parishioners choose to drive longer distances to attend certain parishes when there may be another Orthodox parish closer to their residence. There may be numerous reasons for why this church skipping occurs, such as church leadership, programs for children, language usage, ethnic identity, vibrancy of worship, social programs, jurisdictional affiliation, generational attendance, and so on, but research needs to be done to bring these reasons to light.

In addition to research showing the number of parishes that are skipped, it would also demonstrate how many Orthodox parishes of different jurisdictions are being skipped. For example, do Serbian Orthodox families drive past Greek Orthodox parishes closer to their homes to attend a Serbian Orthodox parish? If so, why? This type of research may bring us closer to understanding the jurisdic-

tional disunity of Orthodoxy and its various complexities with the United States.

Other important data generated by the study that could be used to foster growth and to change the perception of the Orthodox Church in the United States are those findings regarding the use of languages in Orthodox worship, as well as those findings regarding attempts to preserve racial/ethnic or national identities. While the overwhelming majority of parishes were found to conduct their services primarily in English, a few Orthodox parishes report focusing on preserving a racial/ethnic or national identity. These findings demonstrate that the use of English in Orthodox worship is widespread. These data could be used to foster outreach and to change misperceptions of those who typically perceive the Orthodox faith as primarily serving cultural and ethnic interests. The Orthodox Church is commonly portrayed in the media as ethnocentric or nationalist and as a church that conducts its worship services in languages that visitors may not understand. If these misperceptions could be altered through a carefully planned pan-Orthodox strategy, those searching for a new faith tradition might be more willing to consider the Orthodox Church as a viable Christian community at which they could feel welcome.

Of course, this discussion is a natural extension of outreach efforts to prospective members and the growth of Church. It might be time to engage in a systematic dialogue regarding a protocol for outreach techniques such as greeters during services, parking spots designated for visitors, outreach phone calls, strategic marketing, and other measures to those who visit or are considering a visit to an Orthodox parish. Beginning such a discussion or publicly identifying parishes that already effectively perform such outreach might bring this issue into the mainstream and ultimately establish a protocol for other parishes to follow.

In addition to organized efforts of outreach, the growth of a parish depends on its members' faith practices. Although some vital congregations may emphasize tradition and creed, the results of the core FACT study show that the growth of a congregation depends upon the emphasis given to daily religious practices performed personally and by families within the home. This finding seems especially important to the growth of Orthodox parishes. To be sure, tradition and creed are essential elements of the Orthodox faith as these guide Orthodox thought and practice. However, the findings show that congregational growth depends upon having the Church focus more intently on guiding its members to integrate its teachings, i.e. its traditions and creeds, into the individual's daily lifestyle, business dealings, family interactions, and value system. This attention to daily personal practice is an imperative that cannot be overlooked.

The invitation that was extended to the Orthodox Church to participate in the groundbreaking congregational study through the Faith Communities Today (FACT) and the Cooperative Congregations Study Project (CCSP), and the acceptance of this invitation by SCOBA, is noteworthy. This invitation very publicly acknowledged and included the Orthodox Church as one of the major Christian congregations within the United States. The data that was generated by the participating Orthodox parishes was considered by the organizers as integral to understanding the way that religion is practiced in the United States today. The findings of the study also demonstrated that the Orthodox Church is one of the Christian churches most actively participating in ecumenical dialogue and interfaith involvement. Indeed, this involvement has made the Orthodox Church quite visible to other faith communities in the country. The Orthodox Church's participation in this study was vital in that it informed the other faith denominations of Orthodox prac-

tices while allowing the Orthodox Church to document its religious practices as they existed in at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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